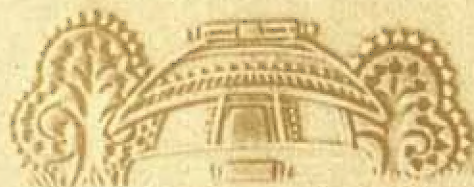


एष देवो विश्वकर्मा महात्मा
सदा जनानां हृदये सन्निविष्टः ।
हृदा मनीषा मनसाऽभिक्लृप्तो
य एतद् विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

— श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषद्



MAHATMA

IN EIGHT VOLUMES

Volume IV

PUBLISHED BY

VITHALBHAI K. JHAVERI & D. G. TENDULKAR

64 Walkeshwar Road, Bombay 6

July 1952

Distributors :

Publications Department, The Times of India Press, Fort, Bombay 1

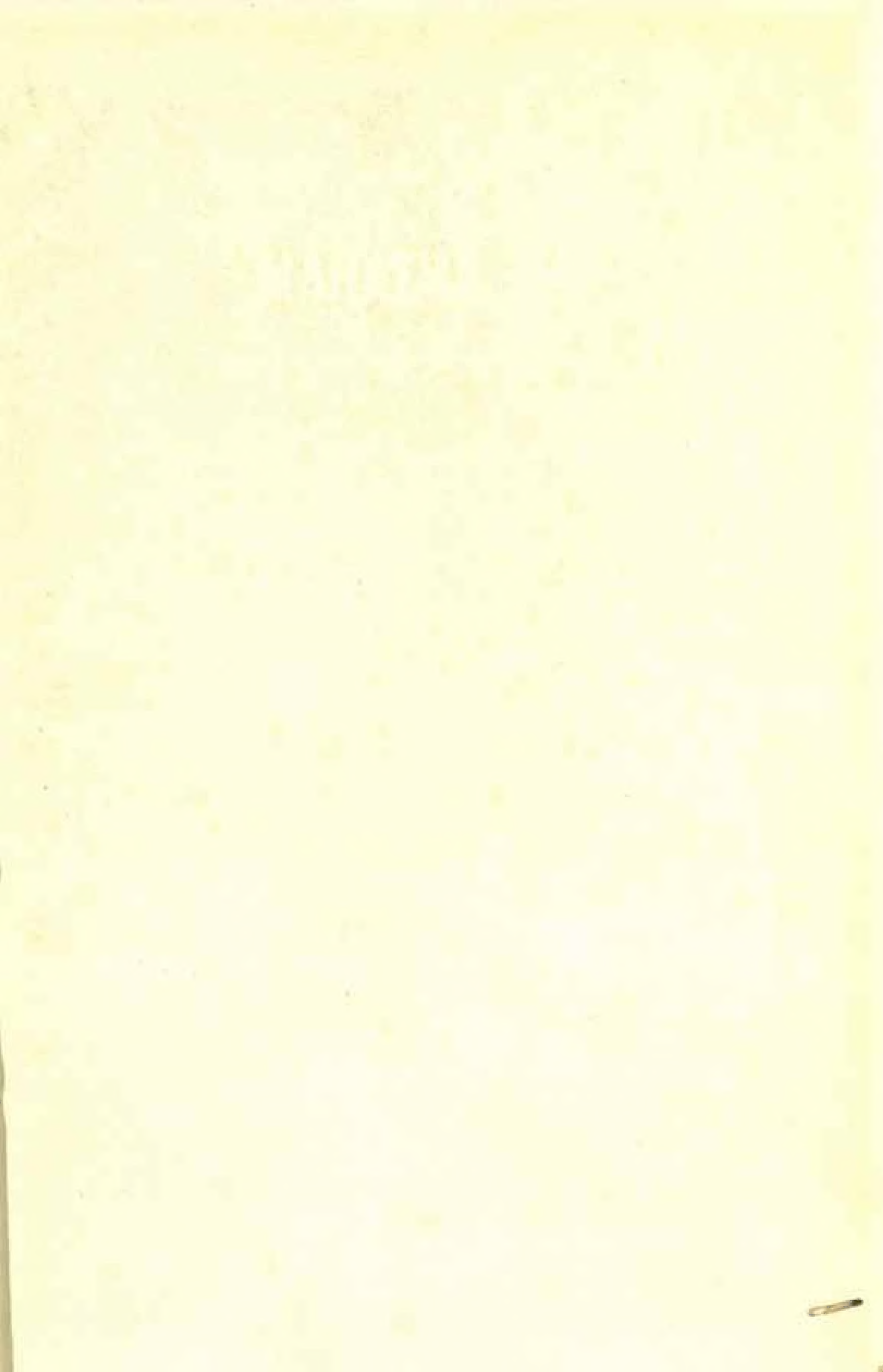
Per volume Rs. 25

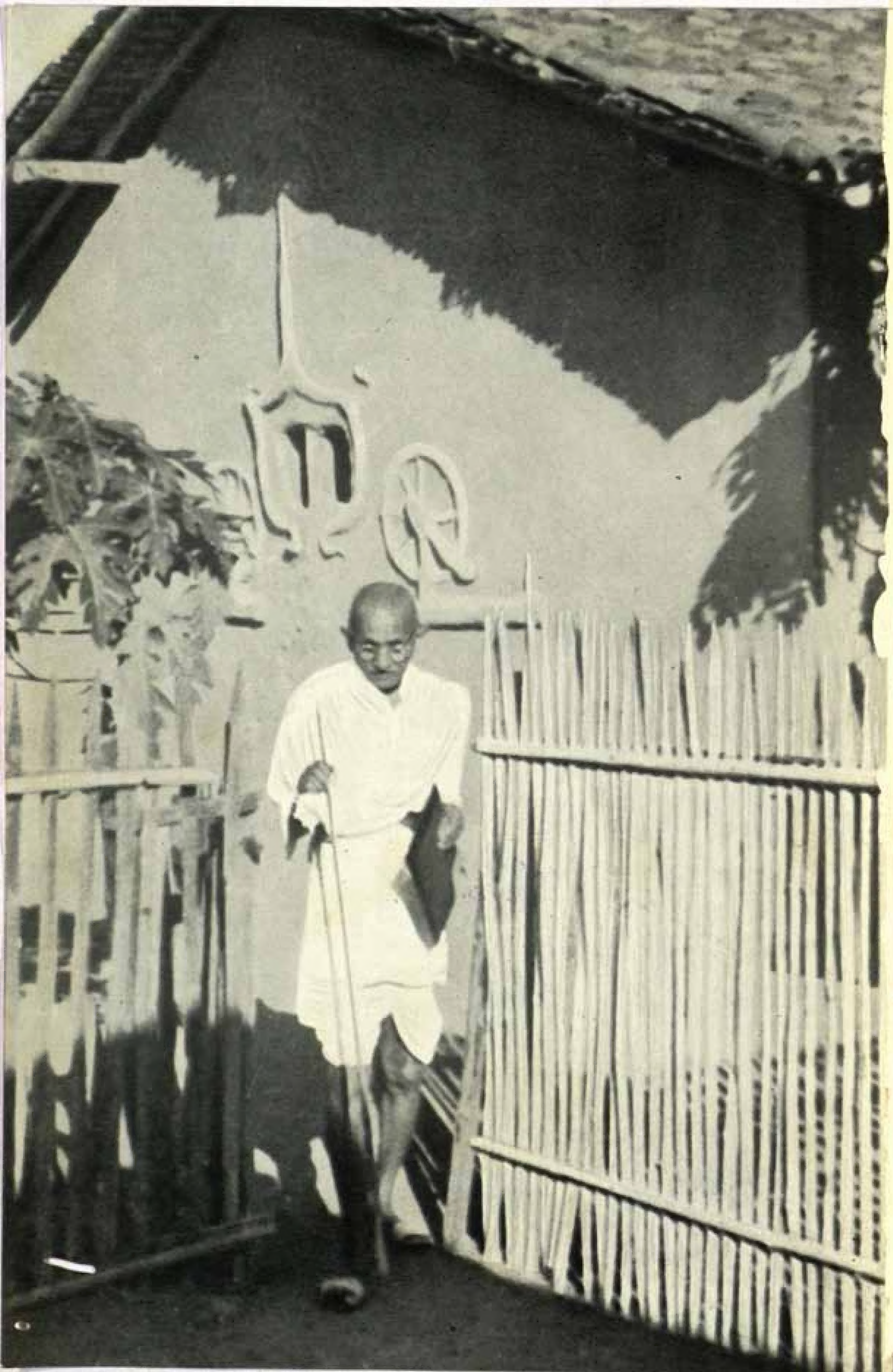
Set Rs. 180

The book is bound in specially manufactured handloom cloth

Jacket and fly-leaf printed on Indian handmade paper at The Premier Offset Works, Bombay 4

Printed by Shyam Sunder Lal at The Times of India Press, Bombay, India





MAHATMA

LIFE OF MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

His is the One Luminous, Creator of All, Mahatma,
Always in the hearts of the people enshrined,
Revealed through Love, Intuition, and Thought,
Whoever knows Him, Immortal becomes.

By

D. G. TENDULKAR

Illustrations collected and arranged by

VITHALBHAI K. JHAVERI



VOLUME FOUR 1934-1938

From The Publishers

THE FIRST volume depicted the early years of Gandhiji's life, his leadership in the South African struggle and his emergence in the field of Indian politics. The second volume opened with the new epoch, the Gandhian era, and it ended with the passing of the resolution on complete independence at the Lahore Congress on the last day of 1929. The third volume covered some of his subsequent political and social activities: the historic march to Dandi; pleading of India's case at the Round Table Conference in London; campaign against untouchability; dynamic approach to swadeshi; his temporary retirement from the Congress in October 1934.

The fourth volume depicts Gandhiji's ceaseless activities during 1934-8 in the field of village reconstruction work through the All-India Spinners' Association and the All-India Village Industries Association. For full four years he concentrated on constructive revolution or teaching the masses the art of turning the idle hours to wealth. His great popularity and organizational genius enabled the Congress to sweep the polls in the general elections of 1937. He confined himself to constructive activities but removed the self-imposed ban on politics by expressing his views fervently through *Harijan* for the benefit of the Congress ministers, Congressmen and the people in general. His articles on prohibition, basic education, duties and rights, the old order and the new, sanitation, medicine, self-control *v.* birth control, art and literature for the masses, became the guiding principles to all who wanted to think and act along the new philosophy of life. Intellectuals and social workers from all over the world trekked to his residence in Segaon village to discuss new and old problems. War-clouds seemed to burst when the Munich Pact was signed and he advised the Congress to stand by non-violence in war or in peace. There were rumblings in the Indian states and he directed people's movement and warned the rulers.

To test the effect of his teachings, he visited the N.-W. Frontier Province and was filled with high hopes in Ghaffar Khan and his followers. The silent constructive revolution forms the main theme of the fourth volume.

The remaining four volumes depict the Gandhian era with its different phases leading to India's freedom.

In this arduous task of collecting material and undertaking the publication of an eight-volume biography of Gandhiji, we have had co-operation from several friends and sympathizers, individual acknowledgements to whom are already made in the introduction to the first volume.

Gandhiji gave his graceful co-operation and thus made our work smoother. Jawaharlal Nehru has taken a keen interest in the publication and continues to give encouragement. R. R. Diwakar has helped us from the very beginning and he has made possible its publication in the present form.

Anu Bandyopadhyaya has given her ample co-operation in seeing the proofs, preparing the glossary and index.

Sumati Morarjee has lent us her unique collection of illustrations for embellishing the biography.

We are thankful to the workers of the Times of India Press for their co-operation.

Although the greatest care is taken in the preparation of this biography, we should be thankful if readers point out any mistakes they may come across in these volumes. We would also be glad if they send us any documentary or pictorial material bearing on Gandhiji's life for reproduction in subsequent volumes.

D. G. Tendulkar
Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri

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Jacket and fly-leaf designed by Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri

MAHATMA

Village Industries

1934

Gandhi retired from the Congress to throw himself with redoubled zeal and vigour into the revival and development of village industries, Harijan service and other constructive activities. Now he took his abode in Satyagraha Ashram, Wardha, and turned it into a hive of activities.

Harijan made no mention of the Congress session nor of Gandhi's retirement. Its pages were devoted to the constructive programme. Assessing the achievements of the All-India Spinners' Association, Gandhi observed: "This association is serving over 5,300 villages and through them supporting 2,20,000 spinners, 20,000 weavers and 20,000 carders. During the ten years of its existence, over two and a quarter crore of rupees have been distributed among these villagers. In other words, at least that much wealth was produced in the country through the efforts of the association, and the whole of it has contributed to the prosperity of the villagers, not by destroying any of the existing industries but by utilizing their idle hours. Out of the two and a quarter crores, three-quarters went into the pockets of the spinners, and Rs. 95,00,000 into the pockets of the farmers for the cotton which the association bought for the spinners. On an average, these three classes of workers—spinners, weavers, carders—added twelve rupees per year to their earnings. In individual cases it has been found that as much as forty-three per cent has been added to the earnings of the spinners."

He was wholly occupied with the Village Industries Association, and his post on the subject was already more than he could cope with. Giving a full picture of what he meant by village industries, he wrote to a correspondent:

"In a nutshell, of the things we use, we should restrict our purchases to the articles which villagers manufacture. Their manufactures may be crude. We must try to induce them to improve their

workmanship, and not dismiss them because foreign articles or even articles produced in cities, that is, big factories, are superior. In other words, we should evoke the artistic talent of the villager. In this way shall we repay somewhat the debt we owe to them. We need not be frightened by the thought whether we shall ever succeed in such an effort. Within our own times we can recall instances where we have not been baffled by the difficulty of our tasks when we have known that they were essential for the nation's progress. If, therefore, we as individuals believe that revivification of India's villages is a necessity of our existence, if we believe that thereby only can we root out untouchability and feel one with all, no matter to what community or religion they may belong, we must mentally go back to the villages and treat them as our pattern, instead of putting the city life before them for imitation. If this is the correct attitude, then, naturally, we begin with ourselves and thus use, say, handmade paper instead of mill-made, use village reed, wherever possible, instead of the fountain pen or the penholder, ink made in the villages instead of the big factories, etc. I can multiply instances of this nature. There is hardly anything of daily use in the home which the villagers have not made before and cannot make even now. If we perform the mental trick and fix our gaze upon them, we immediately put millions of rupees into the pockets of the villagers, whereas, at the present moment, we are exploiting the villagers without making any return worth the name. It is time we arrested the progress of the tragedy. To me, the campaign against untouchability has begun to imply ever so much more than the eradication of the ceremonial untouchability of those who are labelled untouchables. For the city dweller, the villages have become untouchables. He does not know them, he will not live in them, and if he finds himself in a village, he will want to reproduce the city life there. This would be tolerable, if we could bring into being cities which would accommodate thirty crores of human beings. This is much more impossible than the one of reviving the village industries and stopping the progressive poverty, which is due as much to enforced unemployment as to any other cause."

In a leading article on the "Village Industries" Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* dated November 16, 1934:

"As the author of the Congress resolutions on village industries and as the sole guide of the association that is being formed for their promotion, it is but meet that I should, as far as possible, share with

the public the ideas that are uppermost in my mind regarding these industries and the moral and hygienic uplift that is intimately associated with them.

"The idea of forming the association took definite shape during the Harijan tour as early as when I entered Malabar. A casual talk with a khadi worker showed to me how necessary it was to have a body that would make an honest attempt to return to the villagers what has been cruelly and thoughtlessly snatched away from them by the city dwellers. The hardest hit among the villagers are the Harijans. They have but a limited choice of the industries that are open to the villagers in general. Therefore, when their industries slip away from their hands, they become like the beasts of burden with whom their lot is cast.

"But the villagers in general are not much better off today. Bit by bit, they are being confined only to the hand-to-mouth business of scratching the earth. Few know that agriculture in the small and irregular holdings of India is not a paying proposition. The villagers live a lifeless life. Their life is a process of slow starvation. They are burdened with debts. The money-lender lends, because he can do no otherwise. He will lose all if he does not. This system of village lending baffles investigation. Our knowledge of it is superficial, in spite of elaborate inquiries.

"Extinction of the village industries would complete the ruin of the 7,00,000 villages of India.

"I have seen in the daily press criticism of the proposals I have adumbrated. Advice has been given to me that I must look for salvation in the direction of using the powers of nature that the inventive brain of man has brought under subjection. The critics say that water, air, oil and electricity should be fully utilized as they are being utilized in the go-ahead West. They say that the control over these hidden powers of nature enables every American to have thirty-three slaves. Repeat the process in India and I dare say that it will thirty-three times enslave every inhabitant of this land, instead of giving every one thirty-three slaves.

"Mechanization is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India. I may not use a plough for digging a few square yards of a plot of land. The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabiting

our villages. The problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year. Strange as it may appear, every mill generally is a menace to the villagers. I have not worked out the figures, but I am safe in saying that every mill-hand does the work of at least ten labourers doing the same work in their villages. In other words, he earns more than he did in his village at the expense of ten fellow villagers. Thus spinning and weaving mills have deprived the villagers of a substantial means of livelihood. It is no answer in reply to say that they turn out cheaper, better cloth, if they do so at all. For, if they have displaced thousands of workers, the cheapest mill cloth is dearer than the dearest khadi woven in the village. Coal is not dear for the coal-miner who can use it there and then, nor is khadi dear for the villager who manufactures his own khadi. But, if the cloth manufactured in the mills displaces village hands, rice-mills and flour-mills not only displace thousands of poor women workers, but damage the health of whole population in the bargain. Where people have no objection to taking flesh diet and can afford it, white flour and polished rice may do no harm, but in India, where millions can get no flesh diet, even where they have no objection to eating it if they can get it, it is sinful to deprive them of the nutritious and vital elements contained in whole wheatmeal and unpolished rice. It is time medical men and others combined to instruct the people on the danger attendant upon the use of white flour and polished rice.

"I have drawn attention to some broad glaring facts to show that the way to take work to the villagers is not through mechanization but that it lies through the revival of the industries they have hitherto followed.

"The function of the All-India Village Industries Association must, in my opinion, be to encourage the existing industries and to revive, where it is possible and desirable, the dying or the dead industries of villages according to the village methods, that is, the villagers working in their own cottages as they have done from times immemorial. These simple methods can be considerably improved as they have been in hand-ginning, hand-carding, hand-spinning and hand-weaving.

"A critic objects that the ancient plan is purely individualistic and can never bring about corporate effort. This view appears to me to be very superficial. Though articles may be manufactured by villagers

in their cottages, they can be pooled together and the profits divided. The villagers may work under supervision and according to plan. The raw material may be supplied from the common stock. If the will to co-operative effort is created, there is surely ample opportunity for co-operation, division of labour, saving of time and efficiency of work. All these things are today being done by the All-India Spinners' Association in over 5,000 villages.

"But khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support khadi in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it, the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of the other industries, khadi could not make further progress. For villagers to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village life must be touched at all points. That is what the two associations are expected to do.

"Naturally they can have nothing to do with politics or political parties. The Congress, in my opinion, did well in making both the associations autonomous and wholly non-political. All parties and all communities can combine to uplift the villages economically, morally and hygienically.

"I know that there is a school of thought that does not regard khadi as an economic proposition at all. I hope that they will not be scared by my having mentioned khadi as the centre of the village activities. I could not complete the picture of my mind without showing the interrelation between khadi and the other village industries. Those who do not see it are welcome only to concentrate their effort on the other industries. But this, too, they will be able to do through the new association, if they appreciate the background I have endeavoured to give in this article."

During the last week of November the Gandhi Seva Sangh held its annual meeting at Wardha. Addressing the constructive workers, Gandhi said:

"Some of you here perhaps know how the Village Industries Association came into being. During my extensive Harijan tour last year it was clearly borne in upon me that the way in which we were carrying on our khadi work was hardly enough either to universalize khadi or to rejuvenate the villages. I saw that it was confined to a very few and that even who used khadi exclusively were under the impression that they need do nothing else and that they might use

other things irrespective of how and where they were made. Khadi was thus becoming a lifeless symbol, and I saw that if the state of things were allowed to go on, khadi might even die of sheer inanition. It is not that a concentrated, intensive effort devoted exclusively to khadi would not be conducive to success, but there was neither that concentration nor that intensity. All did not give all their spare time to the charkha or the *takli* and all had not taken to the exclusive use of khadi, though their number was larger than that of the spinners. But the rest were idle. There were multitudes of men with quantities of enforced leisure on their hands. That I saw was a state which could lead only to our undoing. 'These people', I said to myself, 'could never win swaraj. For, their involuntary and voluntary idleness made them a perpetual prey of exploiters, foreign and indigenous. Whether the exploiter was from outside or from the Indian cities, their state would be the same, they would have no swaraj.' So I said to myself, 'Let these people be asked to do something else; if they will not interest themselves in khadi, let them take up some work which used to be done by their ancestors but which has of late died out.' There were numerous things of daily use which they used to produce themselves not many years ago, but for which they now depend on the outer world. There were numerous things of daily use to the town dweller for which he depended on the villagers but which he now imports from cities. The moment the villagers decided to devote all their spare time to doing something useful and town dwellers to use these village products, the snapped link between the villagers and the town dwellers would be restored. As to which of the extinct or moribund village industries and crafts could be revived, we could not be sure until we sat down in the midst of the villages to investigate, to tabulate and classify. But I picked up two things of the most vital importance: articles of diet and articles of dress. Khadi was there. In the matter of articles of diet, we were fast losing our self-sufficiency. Only a few years ago, we pounded our own paddy and ground our own flour. Put aside for the time being the question of health. It is an indisputable fact that the flour-mill and the rice-mill have driven millions of women out of employment and have deprived them of the means of eking out their income. Sugar is fast taking the place of jaggery, and ready-made articles of diet like biscuits and sweetmeats are freely being imported into our villages. This means that all the village industries are gradually slipping out of the hands of the

villager, who has become a producer of raw materials for the exploiter. He continually gives, and gets little in return. Even the little he gets for the raw material he produces he gives back to the sugar merchant and the cloth merchant. His mind and body have become very much like those of the animals, his constant companions. When we come to think of it, we find that the villager of today is not even half so intelligent or resourceful as the villager of fifty years ago. Whereas the former is reduced to a state of miserable dependence and idleness, the latter used his mind and body for all he needed and produced them at home. Even the village artisan today partakes of the resourcelessness that has overtaken the rest of the village. Go to the village carpenter and ask him to make a spinning wheel for you, go to the village smith and ask him to make a spindle for you, you will be disappointed. This is a deplorable state of things. It is as a remedy for it that the Village Industries Association has been conceived.

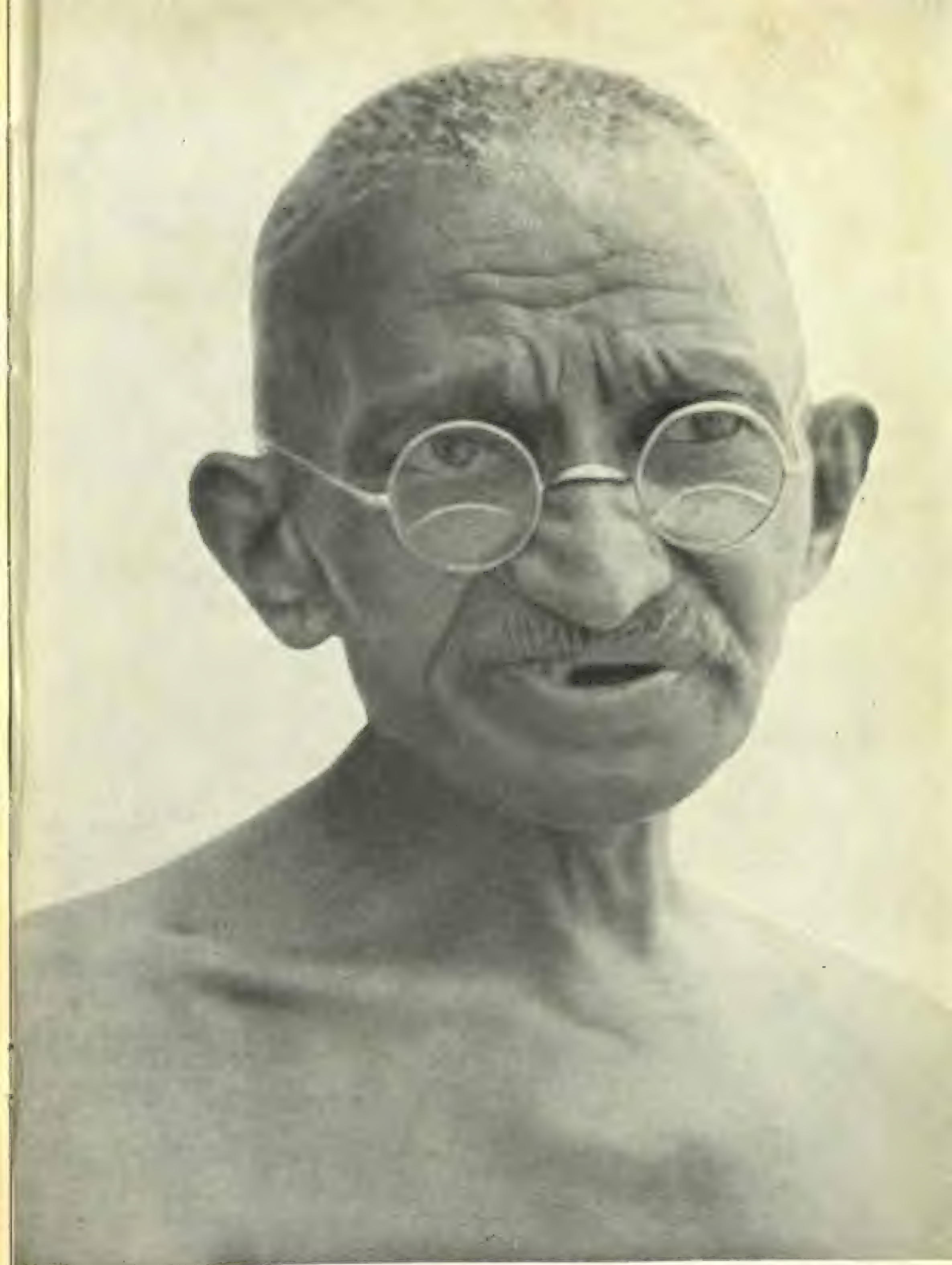
"This cry of 'back to the village', some critics say, is putting back the hands of the clock of progress. But is it really so? Is it going back to the village, or rendering back to it what belongs to it? I am not asking the city dwellers to go to and live in the villages. But I am asking them to render unto the villagers that is due to them. Is there a single raw material that the city dwellers can obtain except from the villager? If they cannot, why not teach him to work on it himself, as he used to before and as he would do now but for our exploiting inroads?

"But this reinstating the villager in what was once his natural position is no easy task. I had thought that I should be able to frame a constitution and set the association going with the help of Shri Kumarappa within a short time. But the more I dive into it, the more I find myself out of my depth. In a sense, the work is much more difficult than khadi, which does not in any way offer a complicated problem. You have simply to exclude all foreign and machine-made cloth, and you have established khadi on a secure foundation. But here the field is so vast, there is such an infinite variety of industries to handle and organize, that it will tax all our business talent, expert knowledge and scientific training. It cannot be achieved without hard toil, incessant endeavour and application of all our business and scientific abilities to this supreme purpose. Thus, I sent a questionnaire to several of our well-known doctors and chemists, asking them to enlighten me on the chemical analysis and different food values

of polished and unpolished rice, jaggery and sugar, and so on. Many friends, I am thankful to say, have immediately responded, but only to confess that there has been no research in some of the directions I had inquired about. Is it not a tragedy that no scientist should be able to give me the chemical analysis of such a simple article as *gur*? The reason is that we have not thought of the villager. Take the case of honey. I am told that in foreign countries such a careful analysis of honey is made that no sample which fails to satisfy a particular test is bottled for the market. In India, we have got vast resources for the production of the finest honey, but we have not much expert knowledge in the matter. An esteemed doctor friend writes to say that in his hospital, at any rate, polished rice is taboo and that it has been proved after experiments on rats and other animals that the polished rice is harmful. But why have not all the medical men published the results of their investigation and experiment and joined in declaring the use of such rice as positively harmful?

"I have just by one or two instances indicated my difficulty. What sort of an organization should I have? What kinds of laboratory research shall we have to go in for? We shall need a number of scientists and chemists prepared to lay not only their expert knowledge at our disposal, but to sit down in our laboratories and to devote hours of time, free of charge, to experiments in the directions I have indicated. We shall have not only to publish the results from time to time, but we shall have to inspect and certify various products. Also we shall have to find out whether the villager who produces an article or foodstuff rests content with exporting it and with using a cheap substitute imported from outside. We shall have to see that the villagers become first of all self-contained and then cater for the needs of the city dwellers.

"For this purpose we shall have to form district organizations, and, where districts are too big to handle, we may have to divide the districts into sub-districts. Each of these—some 250—should have an agent who will carry out a survey and submit a report in the terms of the instructions issued to him from the head office. These agents shall have to be full-timers and whole-hoggers, with a live faith in the programme and prepared immediately to make the necessary adjustment in their daily life. This work will certainly need money, but, more than money, this work will need men of strong faith and willing hands."



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi, aged 65





From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi on his daily walk, Wardha, 1934
With Vinoba Bhave, Wardha

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi with Jamnalal Bajaj, Satyagraha Ashram, Wardha, 1934

Photograph : Counsic Bros.

On the premises of the ashram, Wardha, 1934

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

A visitor paying his respects to Gandhi



Photograph : Rama Vyas

Gandhi with Abbas Tyabji, 1934

Photograph : M. Desai

Gandhi at the spinning wheel, 1934



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi with Mahadev Desai, 1934

At the end of Gandhi's speech the workers put some questions and he replied to them.

Question: Will not this programme swamp the khadi programme which has yet to be fulfilled?

Answer: No. Khadi cannot be moved from its central place. Khadi will be the sun of the whole industrial solar system. All the other industries will receive warmth and sustenance from khadi industry.

Question: What exactly are the industries which we must revive or promote?

Answer: I have indicated the lines. We must promote every useful industry that was existent a short while ago and the extinction of which has now resulted in unemployment.

Question: Have we to declare a boycott of the rice and the flour mills?

Answer: We have to declare no boycott as such, but we shall ask the people to husk their own rice and to grind their own flour, and we shall carry on persistent propaganda in favour of hand-pounded rice and hand-ground flour as better articles of diet from the point of view of health. Let us declare a boycott of idleness.

Question: Shall we use the Congress committees for this purpose?

Answer: Of course. We shall use and take help from any source. We have no politics as such and no party.

Question: The formation of the central board then means centralization?

Answer: Not quite. The districts will be the working centres. The central office will be only a watch-tower for the whole of India, issuing instructions, but not a board of administration. It will be a sort of a correspondence school through which the various agents will carry on mutual exchange of thought and compare notes. We want to avoid centralization of administration, we want centralization of thought, ideas and scientific knowledge.

In pursuance of the Congress resolution passed at Bombay, the All-India Village Industries Association was born amid calm surroundings and without any fuss on December 14, at Wardha, thanks to Jamnalal Bajaj who set apart ample ground with buildings for the use of the association. Its object was defined as village reorganization and reconstruction. Under its constitution, it was to work under the guidance and the advice of Gandhi and was empowered to carry on a research work, publish literature, organize propaganda, establish

agencies, devise measures for the improvement of village tools and do everything that may be necessary for the furtherance of its objects. Among the prominent members of the first board of management were J. C. Kumarappa, the organizer and the secretary, Dr. Prafulla Ghosh, Shankarlal Banker, and Dr. Khan Sahib. The board had on its list expert advisers, namely, Rabindranath Tagore, Sir J. C. Bose, Sir P. C. Ray, Sir C. V. Raman, Dr. Ansari and others.

The association, though a creation of the Congress, was made deliberately non-political and autonomous. Its members were pledged, whilst they remained such, to abstain from participating in any campaign of civil disobedience. There was a permanent board of management which again was responsible to a board of trustees who were in charge of the funds and property of the association. As the scope of the association was extensive and covered the entire field of social and economic life of the village, it was not the closely knit body that the All-India Spinners' Association was. The range of its activities in the direction of production and distribution had been restricted. Apart from the boards of trustees and management, the association consisted of two grades of members, ordinary members and agents. Persons who subscribed to the creed of the association and promised to devote the best part of their energy and talents to the furtherance of its objects—the relief and service of the poor in the villages—were enrolled as members. They had to pledge themselves to live up to the ideals of the association and to prefer village manufactures to any other. Agents had to sign a similar pledge and in addition they had to render honorary service in the village or villages or district where they chose to work. They were selected by reason of their knowledge of the area of their jurisdiction, their organizing capacity and their local influence.

A business-like appeal was issued immediately after the formation of the All-India Village Industries Association:

"Pending the establishment of agencies and in order that no time may be lost in the execution of the village uplift programme, the board of management appeals to the public to concentrate attention on the popularization of the use of hand-pounded unpolished rice, hand-ground whole wheatmeal flour and village-made *gur*. The board is already in possession of the testimony of medical experts that mill-pounded polished rice, mill-ground flour and mill-refined sugar are much inferior to hand-pounded unpolished rice, hand-ground

whole wheatmeal flour and village-made *gur*. Whilst, in the matter of village *ghani*-pressed oil and the mill-pressed oil, the evidence is indecisive, the balance of opinion is in favour of *ghani*-pressed fresh oil. Evidence is, however, conclusive that all the articles commonly sold in the bazars are adulterated and harmful to health. This adulteration can be easily avoided if the recommendation of the association is followed by the public. The economic benefit accruing to the villages from such adoption will be incalculable.

"The board also feel that the work of rural hygiene ought not to be delayed. The intelligentsia can immediately begin the work of sanitation, in the way of simple road-making in the villages, improved and economic methods of disposal of human excreta, cleaning of the village wells and tanks, and teaching the villagers the proper use of water-supply."

At the end of the year, he gave an important interview to Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose. The questions related to fundamental political and social matters.

Question: "While working in a village, we have found that the chief obstacle to any real improvement in the condition of the villagers are two in number: First, they have forgotten the art of co-operation among themselves or of joining hands in order to resist any encroachment upon their rights; Secondly, they live practically enslaved by those who merely own the land while doing no work, and control the money resources of the village. This slavery, which is due partly to their own character, and our complete neglect of their education, have left the masses completely devoid of any will of their own.

"What should be our principal object in khadi work or other forms of village reconstruction? Khadi work in some parts of Bengal has degenerated into a mere method of giving a little relief to the villagers, while it has failed to restore the will which alone can bring about any lasting transformation in their condition.

"Our question is, should khadi be merely that sort of humanitarian work or should we use it chiefly as an instrument of political education? Our own experience has been that unless the ultimate objective is kept clearly in mind, it degenerates easily into a work of no significance."

Answer: "The two issues of khadi and political organization should be kept absolutely separate. There must be no confusion. The aim of

khadi is humanitarian; but so far as India is concerned, its effect is bound to be immensely political.

"The Salvation Army wants to teach people about God. But they come with bread. For the poor bread is their God. Similarly, we should bring food to the mouths of the people through khadi. If we succeed in breaking the idleness of the people through khadi, they will begin to listen to us. Whatever else the Government might do, it does leave some food for the villagers. Unless we can bring food to them, why should the people listen to us? When we have taught them what they can do through their own efforts, then they will want to listen to us.

"That trust can best be generated through khadi. While working out the khadi programme, our aim should be purely humanitarian, that is, economic. We should leave out all political considerations whatsoever. But it is bound to produce important political consequences which nobody can prevent and nobody need deplore."

Question: "Could we not start small battles on local and specific issues against capitalism in the villages and use them as a means of strengthening the people or bringing about a sense of co-operation among them, in preference to the khadi method? When we have a choice between the two, which should we prefer? If we have to sacrifice all the work that we have built up in the villages in connection with khadi while fighting against the money-lender or the landed proprietor, for, say, a reduction in the rate of interest or an increase in the share of agricultural produce, then what shall we do—provided the latter is more liable to evoke self-confidence among the villagers than the khadi method of organization?"

Answer: "It is a big proviso you have added at the end of the question. I cannot say if fights on local and specific issues against capitalists are more likely to generate the kind of determination and courage needed in a non-violent campaign. But, if I concede you that point, then khadi would have to be sacrificed under the circumstances you quote. As a practical man, claiming to be an expert in non-violent methods, I should advise you not to go in for that type of work in order to train the masses in self-consciousness and attainment of power.

"We are fighting for swaraj in non-violent way. If many workers in different parts of India engage in local battles of the sort you describe, then in times of necessity, the people all over India will not be

able to make a common cause in a fight for swaraj. Before civil disobedience can be practised on a vast scale, people must learn the art of civil or voluntary obedience. Our obedience to the Government is through fear; and the reaction against it is either violence itself or that species of it, which is cowardice. But through khadi we teach the people the art of civil obedience to an institution which they have built up for themselves. Only when they have learnt that art, can they successfully disobey something which they want to destroy in the non-violent way. That is why I should advise all workers not to fritter their fighting strength in many-sided battles, but to concentrate on peaceful khadi work in order to educate the masses into a condition necessary for a successful practice of non-violent non-co-operation. With their own exploitation, boycott of foreign cloth through picketing may easily be violent; through the use of khadi it is most natural and absolutely non-violent."

Question: "Is love or non-violence compatible with possession or exploitation in any shape or form? If possession and non-violence cannot go together, then do you advocate the maintenance of private ownership of land or factories as an unavoidable evil which will continue so long as individuals are not ripe or educated enough to do without it? If it be such a step, would it not be better to own all the land through the state and place the state under the control of the masses?"

Answer: "Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically when there is perfect love there must be perfect non-possession. The body is our last possession. So a man can only exercise perfect love and be completely dispossessed, if he is prepared to embrace death and renounces his body for the sake of human service. But that is true in theory only. In actual life, we can hardly exercise perfect love, for the body as a possession will always remain with us. Man will ever remain imperfect, and it will always be his part to try to be perfect. So that perfection in love or non-possession will remain an unattainable ideal as long as we are alive but towards which we must ceaselessly strive.

"Those who own money now are asked to behave like the trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But, if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present. Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like

Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method."

Question: "If you say that private possession is incompatible with non-violence, why do you put up with it?"

Answer: "That is a concession one has to make to those who earn money, but who would not voluntarily use their earnings for the benefit of mankind."

Question: "Why then not have state ownership in place of private property and thus minimize violence?"

Answer: "It is better than private ownership. But that too is objectionable on the ground of violence. It is my conviction that if the state suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time. The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship."

Question: "Let us come to a specific instance. Suppose an artist leaves certain pictures to a son who does not appreciate their value for the nation and sells them or wastes them, so that the nation stands to lose something precious through one person's folly. If you are assured that the son would never be a trustee in the sense in which you would like to have him, don't you think the state would be justified in taking away those things from him with the minimum use of violence?"

Answer: "Yes, the state will, as a matter of fact, take away those things, and I believe it will be justified if it uses the minimum of violence. But the fear is always there that the state may use too much violence against those who differ from it. I would be very happy indeed, if the people concerned behaved as trustees; but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the state with the minimum exercise of violence. That is why I said at the Round Table Conference that every vested interest must be subjected to scrutiny and confiscation ordered where necessary, with or without compensation as the case demanded.

"What I would personally prefer would be not a centralization of power in the hands of the state, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship; as in my opinion the violence of private ownership is less

injurious than the violence of the state. However, if it is unavoidable, I would support a minimum of state ownership."

Question: "Then shall we take it that the fundamental difference between you and the socialists is that you believe that men live more by self-direction or will than by habit, and they believe that men live more by habit than by will, that being the reason why you strive for self-correction, while the socialists try to build up a system under which men will find it impossible to exercise their desire for exploiting others?"

Answer: "While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold that it is better for him to live by the exercise of will. I also believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce the exploitation to a minimum. I look upon an increase of the power of the state with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress. We know of so many cases where men have adopted trusteeship, but none where the state has really lived for the poor."

Question: "But have not those cases of trusteeship which you cite sometimes been due to your personal influence rather than to anything else? Teachers like you come infrequently. Would it not be better, therefore, to trust to some organization to effect the necessary changes in man, rather than depend upon the casual advent of men like yourself?"

Answer: "Leaving me aside, you must remember that the influence of all great teachers of mankind has outlived their lives. In the teachings of each prophet like Mahomed, Buddha or Jesus, there was a permanent portion and there was another which was suited to the needs and requirements of the times. It is only because we try to keep up the permanent with the impermanent aspects of their teaching that there is so much distortion in religious practice today. But that apart you can see that the influence of these men has sustained after they have passed away.

"Moreover, what I disapprove of is an organization based on force which a state is. Voluntary organization there must be."

Question: "What then is your ideal social order?"

Answer: "I believe that every man is born in the world with certain natural tendencies. Every person is born with certain definite limitations which he cannot overcome. From a careful observation

of those limitations the law of *varna* was deduced. It establishes certain spheres of action for certain people with certain tendencies. This avoided all unworthy competition. Whilst recognizing limitations the law of *varna* admitted of no distinctions of high and low; on the one hand it guaranteed to each the fruits of his labours and on the other it prevented him from pressing upon his neighbour. This great law has been degraded and fallen into disrepute. But my conviction is that an ideal social order will only be evolved when the implications of this law are fully understood and given effect to."

Question: "Do you not think that in ancient India there was much difference in economic status and social privileges between the four *varnas*?"

Answer: "That may be historically true. But misapplication or an imperfect understanding of the law must not lead to the ignoring of the law itself. By constant striving we have to enrich the inheritance left to us. This law determines the duties of man. Rights follow from a due performance of duties. It is the fashion nowadays to ignore duties and assert or rather usurp rights."

Question: "If you are so keen upon reviving Varnashrama, why do you not favour violence as the quickest means?"

Answer: "Surely the question does not arise. Definition and performance of duties rules out violence altogether. Violence becomes imperative when an attempt is made to assert rights without reference to duties."

Question: "Should we not confine our pursuit of truth to ourselves and not press it upon the world, because, we know that it is ultimately limited in character?"

Answer: "You cannot so circumscribe truth even if you try. Every expression of truth has in it the seeds of propagation, even as the sun cannot hide its light."

Sanctions For Swaraj

1935

Public interest during the early months of 1935 was focused upon the session of the new Legislative Assembly in Delhi, which opened on January 21. The strength of the various parties in the assembly was: Congress Party 44, Congress Nationalist Party 11, Independent Party 22, European group 11, officials 26, nominated non-officials 13. The Government could normally rely on fifty votes; the Congress Party and the Congress Nationalist Party combined, on fifty. Thus the results of most divisions depended upon the attitude adopted by the Independent Party.

During the course of the session the opposition carried several divisions against the Government. Jinnah, leader of the Independent Party, joined hands with Bhulabhai Desai, leader of the Congress Party, to force the Viceroy to exercise his powers of certification on many an occasion. The whole of the demands for the grants for the Railway Board and the Defence Department, and of the whole of the supplementary demand for customs were refused by the assembly and the Governor-General had to restore them. The salt duty and the postal and telegraph rates fared similarly. On the constitutional issue Jinnah opposed the rejection of the Government of India Act as a whole, and the Congress motion for rejection was lost by 72 votes to 61. But he secured the backing of the Congress for the three resolutions of his own, the first acquiescing in the Communal Award pending an alternative settlement by the communities themselves, the second criticizing provincial part of the act but not condemning it outright, and the third denouncing the federal part as fundamentally bad and totally unacceptable, and demanding the prompt establishment of full responsible government in a federated British India.

A very striking and novel feature of the budget proposals was the allotment of one crore of rupees to the provinces for the economic

development and improvement of the rural areas. The Government wanted to forestall Congress activities in the villages. Simultaneously the Government issued a confidential circular to the local authorities calling their attention to the probable implications of the "new deal" of Gandhi—implications which in the opinion of the Government might point to a contemplated revival of the subversive movement on an extended scale, involving the masses in the villages—and to the need of forestalling and counter-manoeuvring Gandhi in what he intended to do. The circular represented the Bombay session of the Congress as the greatest personal triumph for Gandhi.

On the very first day of the assembly session, the Government circular was discussed in the house. Sir Henry Craik, Home Member, did not deny the issue of the confidential circular and said "that the circular was confidential and contained tentative views of the Government of India and as one newspaper described it, it meant that the Government was talking in private." The Home Member claimed that he had chapter and verse to prove the facts mentioned in the circular: "Acharya Kripalani, the General Secretary of the Congress, had also stated in the press that the association was aimed at creating revolution to proceed from the villages. This was direct from the horse's mouth. Could then the Government be blamed for pointing out the dangerous potentialities of the organization? If, however, later developments showed that the organization was purely economic, the Government would not withhold co-operation from it. But so long as the Congress maintained its present attitude towards civil disobedience, the Government was justified in asking its agents to watch the move carefully."

Gandhi, who was then in Delhi, welcomed the Government plan of forestalling him in his village industries work as very useful co-operation: "I should be very glad if Government were to take the wind out of my sails. Much of the work that I propose doing is what Government ought to do. Let Government do whatever they can do, only let not anything be superimposed on the people. If Government helped me, I could produce magical results; but it could be possible only if they helped me in the right spirit. There are so many ways in which they could help. They could help with the necessary legislation. But don't ask me to express any opinion on what Government are doing. I do not want to criticize their work. So far as I am concerned, my life is an open book, and there is absolutely nothing

that I would keep secret from them. I have necessarily chosen items to which nobody's attention has been drawn and where I do not trench on ground covered by others. Thus, in my campaign for unpolished rice, hand-ground flour and village-made *gur*, I am simply asking the people not to pay for undermining their health. For, that is what they are at present doing, and I am thankful to say that I am supported in my view by the highest experts in the land. I dare not think of land improvement and improvement in the methods of agriculture, for I know my limitations, and I want people to do all that they can do without any outside help. My only object is to abolish idleness, to help people to turn their time to good account, to prevent misfeeding and to stop all economic waste. The whole of my campaign for unpolished rice, for hand-ground flour, for *gur*, for hand-pressed oil and for the economic disposal of carcasses should be looked at in that light."

For the guidance of workers, he started a series of articles under "How to Begin" in *Harijan* of January 25:

"Each person can examine all the articles of food, clothing and other things that he uses from day to day and replace foreign makes or city makes by those produced by the villagers in their homes or fields with the simple inexpensive tools they can easily handle and mend. This replacement will be itself an education of great value and a solid beginning. The next step will be opened out to him of itself. For instance, say, the beginner has been hitherto using a tooth-brush made in a Bombay factory. He wants to replace it with a village brush. He is advised to use a *babul* twig. If he has weak teeth or is toothless, he has to crush one end of it, with a rounded stone or a hammer, on a hard surface. The other end he slits with a knife and uses the halves as tongue-scrapers. He will find these brushes to be cheaper and much cleaner than the very unhygienic factory-made tooth-brush. The city-made tooth-powder he naturally replaces with equal parts of clean, finely-ground weed-charcoal and clean salt. He will replace mill cloth with village-spun khadi, and mill-husked rice with hand-husked and unpolished rice, and white sugar with village-made *gur*. These I have taken merely as samples already mentioned in these columns. I have mentioned them again to deal with the difficulties that have been mentioned by those who have been discussing the question with me. Some say with reference to rice, for instance, 'Hand-husked rice is much dearer than mill-husked rice.'

Others say, 'The art of hand-husking is forgotten, and there are no huskers to be found.' Yet others say, 'We never get mill-husked rice in our parts. We can supply hand-husked rice at nineteen seers to the rupee.' All these are right and all are wrong. They are right so far as their own experience in their own district is concerned. All are wrong because the real truth is unknown to them. I am daily gathering startling experiences. All this comes from beginning with oneself. The following is the result of my observations to date:

"Whole, unpolished rice is unprocurable in the bazars. It is beautiful to look at and rich and sweet to the taste. Mills can never compete with this unpolished rice. It is husked in a simple manner. Most of the paddy can be husked in a light *chakki* without difficulty. There are some varieties the husk of which is not separated by grinding. The best way of treating such paddy is to boil it first and then separate the chaff from the grain. This rice, it is said, is most nutritious and, naturally the cheapest. In the villages, if they husk their own paddy, it must always be cheaper for the peasants than the corresponding mill-husked rice, whether polished or unpolished. The majority of the rice found ordinarily in the bazars is always more or less polished, whether hand-husked, or mill-husked. Wholly unpolished rice is always hand-husked and is every time cheaper than the mill-husked rice, the variety being the same.

"Subject to further research, the observations so far show that it is because of our criminal negligence that the rice-eating millions eat deteriorated rice and pay a heavy price into the bargain. Let the village worker test the truth of these observations for himself. It won't be a bad beginning."

In the next issue of *Harijan* Gandhi dealt with wheat and *gur* and made some practical suggestions. In the third article, "How to Begin", he wrote on the importance of village sanitation and hygiene:

"Members of a family will keep their own house clean, but they will not be interested in the neighbour's. They will keep their courtyard clean of dirt, insects and reptiles, but will not hesitate to shove all into the neighbour's yard. As a result of this want of corporate responsibility, our villages are dung-heaps. Though we are an unshod nation, we so dirty our streets and roads that for a sensitive person it is painful to walk along them barefoot. It is difficult to get clean drinkable water in village wells, tanks and streams. The approaches to an ordinary village are heaped with muck and rubbish.

"Village sanitation is, perhaps, the most difficult task before the All-India Village Industries Association. No Government can change the habits of a people without their hearty co-operation. And, if the latter is forthcoming, a Government will have little to do in the matter.

"The intelligentsia—medical men and students—can deal with the problem successfully, if they would conscientiously, intelligently, zealously and regularly do the work in the villages. Attention to personal and corporate hygiene is the beginning of all education.

"The things to attend to in the villages are cleaning tanks and wells and keeping them clean, getting rid of the dung-heaps. If the workers will begin the work themselves, working like paid bhangis from day to day and always letting the villagers know that they are expected to join them so as ultimately to do the whole work themselves, they may be sure that they will find that the villagers will sooner or later co-operate. At least such is my experience of South Africa and Champaran, and even during the quick walking tour in Orissa last year.

"Lanes and streets have to be cleansed of all the rubbish, which should be classified. There are portions which can be turned into manure, portions which have simply to be buried and portions which can be directly turned into wealth. Every bone picked up is valuable raw material from which useful articles can be made or which can be crushed into rich manure. Rags and waste-paper can be turned into paper, and excreta picked up are golden manure for the village fields. The way to treat the excreta is to mix them, liquid as well as solid, with superficial earth in soil dug no deeper than one foot at the most. The way to do it is either to have latrines, with earthen or iron buckets, and empty the contents in properly prepared places from day to day, or to perform the functions directly on the ground dug up in squares. The excreta can either be buried in a village common or in individual fields. At present, this rich manure, valued at lakhs of rupees, runs to waste every day, fouls the air and brings disease into the bargain.

"The village tanks are promiscuously used for bathing, washing clothes and drinking and cooking purposes. Many village tanks are also used by cattle. Buffaloes are often to be seen wallowing in them. The wonder is that in spite of this sinful misuse of the village tanks, villages have not been destroyed by epidemics. It is the universal,

medical evidence that this neglect to ensure the purity of the water-supply of villages is responsible for many of the diseases suffered by the villagers.

"This, it will be admitted, is a gloriously interesting and instructive service, fraught with an incalculable benefit to the suffering humanity of India. I hope it is clear from my description of the way in which the problem should be tackled, that, given willing workers who will wield the broom and the shovel with the same ease and pride as the pen and the pencil, the question of expense is almost wholly eliminated. All the outlay that will be required is confined to a broom, a basket, a shovel, and a pickaxe, and possibly some disinfectant. Dry ashes are, perhaps, as effective a disinfectant as any that a chemist can supply. But here let the philanthropic chemists tell us what is the most effective and cheap village disinfectant that the villagers can improvise in their villages."

On February 15, Gandhi gave an insight into his own contribution to the dietetic experiments undertaken by himself: "For nearly five months, I have been living entirely on uncooked foods. I used to take what appeared to me an enormous quantity of vegetable every day. For the past five months I have been taking green leaves in the place of cooked leaves or other vegetables. It then seemed to me monstrous that I should have to depend upon the Wardha bazar for the few ounces of leaves I needed. One fine morning Chhotelalji of the Wardha ashram brought to me a leaf that was growing wild among the ashram grasses. It was *luni*. I tried it, and it agreed with me. Another day he brought *chakwat*. That also agreed. But before recommending these jungle leaves to the public, I thought I would have them botanically identified. Here is the result . . ."

"Take up any modern text-book on food or vitamins," he said, "and you would find in it a strong recommendation to take a few edible green leaves uncooked at every meal. Of course, these should always be well washed half a dozen times to remove all dirt. These leaves are to be had in every village for the trouble of picking. And yet greens are supposed to be only a delicacy of cities. Villagers in many parts live on *dal* and rice or *roti*, and plenty of chillies, which harm the system. Since the economic reorganization of the villages has been commenced with food reform, it is necessary to find out the simplest and cheapest foods that would enable villagers to regain lost health. The addition of green leaves to their meals will enable the

villagers to avoid many diseases from which they are suffering. The villagers' food is deficient in vitamins; many of them can be supplied by green leaves. An eminent English doctor told me that a proper use of green leaves was calculated to revolutionize the customary notions of food and that much of what was today being supplied by milk might be supplied by green leaves. That, of course, means research and examination in detail of the innumerable leaves that are to be found hidden among the grasses that grow wild in India."

The *Harijan* issue of February 22 devoted its front page to "Cow's Milk *versus* Buffalo's". Gandhi culled the opinions of experts and deduced the following:

"(1) Buffalo milk is injurious to the development of children, and only cow milk is, in the absence of mother's milk, useful to them; (2) Cow milk, being easily digestible, is more beneficial to patients than buffalo milk; (3) There is no definite evidence to show that the use of buffalo milk by adults is in any way injurious; Mr. Bruen, the livestock expert to the Government of Bombay, says that buffalo milk is hard to digest by a person of any age, because the excess fat in buffalo milk when it forms soap in the intestine, is hard to digest with the usual amount of salts, and it takes the deficient quantity of the mineral salts from bones, which are consequently weakened. This does not occur in the digestion of cow milk; (4) Cow milk is useful for intellectual growth, mainly of children. No definite conclusion can be drawn regarding better effect of cow milk on the intellectual growth of adults; (5) If, instead of rearing of buffaloes, cows are kept in the city, it will produce a beneficial effect on the general hygiene of that city with less expense."

From the Satyagraha Ashram, Vinoba Bhave, Mahadev Desai, Mirabehn, Pyarelal and other inmates were engaged in a concentrated effort to test and vindicate the programme of village reconstruction and the revival of cottage industries, in the adjacent hamlet of Sindi. Villagers were given practical lessons in hygiene, dietary, enrichment of soil, spinning and weaving, and the art of sandal-making. They published through the *Harijan* weekly reports on their work. Gandhi personally supervised the scavenging campaign and wrote on hygiene. He made *Harijan* an organ of the All-India Village Industries Association. Scientific facts were made known through *Harijan* on the virtues of honey, *gur*, fresh green vegetables, tamarind, soya beans, etc. Simple articles on vitamins and importance of

a balanced diet were published for the guidance of workers. Snakes were classified and simple treatments for snake-bite explained. On the medical aid to the villagers, Gandhi wrote:

"Where the cases of fever, constipation or such common diseases come to village workers for help, they will certainly have to render such help as they can. Where one is certain of the diagnosis, there is no doubt that the village-bazar medicine is the cheapest and best. If one must stock drugs, castor oil, quinine and boiling water are the best medical agents. Castor oil may be locally procurable. The *senna* leaf may serve the same purpose. Quinine I should use sparingly. Every fever does not require quinine treatment. Nor does every fever yield to quinine. Most fevers will disappear after a fast or semi-fast. Abstention from cereals, pulses and milk, and taking fruit juices or boiling raisin water, even boiling *gur* water with fresh lemon juice or tamarind, is a semi-fast. Boiling water is a most powerful medical agent. It may move the bowels, it will induce perspiration and abate fever; it is the safest and cheapest disinfectant. In every case where it is required to be drunk, it must be allowed to cool till it is fairly bearable to the skin. Boiling does not mean mere heating. The water begins to bubble and evaporate after it is on the boil.

"Where the workers do not know for certain what to do, they must allow the local *vaidya* to have full sway. Where he is non-existent or unreliable and the workers know a philanthropic doctor near by, they may invoke his assistance.

"But they will find that the most effective way of dealing even with disease is to attend to sanitation. Let them remember that nature is the finest physician. They may be sure that nature is repairing what man has damaged. Nature appears to have become powerless when man continuously hampers her. Then she sends death—her last and peremptory agent to destroy what is beyond repair—and provides a fresh garment for the wearer. Sanitary and hygienic workers, are, therefore, the best helpers of the best physician every person has, whether he knows it or not."

Harijan became a practical guide to village reconstruction. Books bearing on village problems were critically examined and relevant extracts were given. Eyewitness accounts of rural uplift in China, Japan and Turkey were reproduced to enlighten the village workers. Matter-of-fact reports of village work in India appeared regularly and Wardha became the centre of rural science.

A number of distinguished foreigners visited Wardha to see for themselves the rural uplift work. Madame Halide Edube Hanum from Turkey, during her three days' stay at the ashram, sat down with a large plate of wheat to clean along with Kasturbai, to get into the spirit of the new movement. Lord Farrington who wanted to know the object of the A.-I.V.I.A., was briefly told by Gandhi "how to turn waste into wealth".

Pierre Ceresole, a friend of Romain Rolland, stayed at the ashram to discuss the new movement. A German visitor spent some weeks at Wardha and went out to Sindi to work in the sun, making a village road. A Japanese monk came and became a member of Gandhi's household. He took part in every detail of the daily work, picked up Hindi and kept a daily diary like any other inmate. "Committed a sad blunder today," was one of the entries in his diary. He had purchased Japanese cloth, because it was the cheapest. "It is indeed swadeshi for you," said Gandhi, "but not the cloth you should go in for in India. In Rome do as the Romans do, is not a meaningless saying. We must try to observe the manners and the customs of the country whose salt we eat. When I was in South Africa, I tried to use as many things as I could, made by the African hands. So unless you have any special objection, I would ask you to use khadi. Khadi is dearer, but you may try to do with less cloth than you need."

In the third week of March, Gandhi decided on a month's silence with a view to clearing off heavy arrears. He avoided visitors as far as possible, but welcomed Bhansali, a recluse and an old worker of Gujarat Vidyapith. For years he was wandering in the forests and had tortured the flesh to the extent of sewing his lips and wearing nothing but an iron belt round his groin. Very often he fasted and sometime as long as fifty-five days and lived on *neem* leaves. Bhansali had been silent for years and had decided to break his silence only to talk to Gandhi, who was observing silence.

Bhansali was disposed to exempt himself from labour in order to develop his perception of reality. He admitted that the suffering of mankind brought him misery but declared his helplessness. "Don't you feel like doing your little bit to lessen the surrounding misery?" put in Gandhi on a piece of paper.

Bhansali: I feel the misery, but also feel that I am powerless to do anything.

Gandhi: When a thorn pierces your foot, you pull it out. Don't you?

Bhansali: Yes.

Gandhi: When you feel hungry, you eat.

Bhansali: I do.

Gandhi: Then if you find a thorn piercing someone else's foot, would you not help him to pull it out? If you find someone suffering from the pangs of hunger, would you not feed him?

Bhansali: I would, if I could.

Gandhi: If there was someone who was going through agonies and there was none to tend him, would you not sit down to do so?

Bhansali: I would, but I could not do much.

Gandhi: Surely, one like you would not shirk a responsibility so lightly? Only one who has exhausted all efforts may say that he can do nothing more. If he has a lame person to attend to, he will give him all the attention that he is capable of. This one act of service will mean the service of humanity.

Bhansali: But I could not exclusively devote my attention to relieving the misery of the distressed. I would do a little bit, but should soon feel powerless.

Gandhi: The world is sustained by sacrifice and service. As the Gita says, the Lord created the beings with duty of sacrifice cast on them.

Bhansali: I know, but are not meditation and worship too sacred?

Gandhi persisted, "Meditation and worship are not exclusive things like jewels to be kept locked up in a strong box. They must be seen in every act of ours. But I will not press you for a reply today. I simply want to set you thinking about this."

Eventually Bhansali began to spin, and then came the time when he worked for eight hours a day. Gandhi's gospel of selfless action triumphed over the traditional philosophy of the recluse.

The fourth week of silence came to an end on April 19. Gandhi plunged once more into incessant activity. He proceeded to Indore to participate in the Hindi Literary Conference. He had placed in the forefront of the conference the carrying of the gospel of Hindi to all the provinces of India, especially to the farthest end of South India. As a result of the effort commenced in 1918, there were by now no less than 600,000 men and women in South India who had a working knowledge of Hindi. Before the advent of the British, he

observed, inter-provincial contact had been kept on through no other medium, and it was the pilgrims and sadhus covering the length and breadth of India visiting the shrines that helped in keeping alive the religious tradition and in maintaining the fundamental unity of India. Today the message of the removal of untouchability, of khadi and of the revival of village industries can be carried to the farthest villages of India only through the medium of Hindi.

In his presidential address, Gandhi laid the emphasis on evolving simple Hindi: "India lives today because of her peasants. If these were to strike work, everyone including even His Highness would have to starve. Sir Hukamchand would have to perish of thirst, in spite of his costly diamonds and jewels, if he happened to be in the desert of Sahara, and if he had no one there to give him a drink of water. Not all our gold and jewellery could satisfy our hunger and quench our thirst. We are entirely dependent on our peasants and our labourers, and our civilization accepts that basic fact. It is the language of these peasants and labourers—the Hindi or Hindustani that they can easily understand—that can become the lingua franca. That will be true democracy in the domain of language. If you speak to them in the tongue that Kalidas spoke, they will not understand it. You will have to learn their language and speak to them in their tongue. For this mission you have my services pledged to you for the whole of the year."

Commenting on the conference, he wrote:

"The Hindi Sahitya Sammelan passed some useful resolutions. Among them was one giving a definition of Hindi, and another expressing the opinion that all the languages that had descended from or had been largely influenced by Sanskrit should be written in the Devanagari script.

"The first resolution is designed to emphasize the fact that Hindi does not supplant the provincial languages, that it supplements them, and that it extends the knowledge and usefulness of the speaker as an all-India worker. By recognizing the fact that the language written in the Urdu script but understood both by Musalmans and Hindus is also Hindi, the *sammelan* disarms the suspicion that it has any design upon the Urdu script. The authorized script of the *sammelan* still remains Devanagari. The propagation of the Devanagari script among the Hindus of the Punjab, as elsewhere, will still continue. The resolution in no way detracts from the value of the Devanagari

script. It recognizes the right of Musalmans to write the language in the Urdu script as they have done hitherto.

"In order to give practical effect to the second resolution a committee was appointed to explore the possibility of such introduction and to make such changes and additions in the Devanagari script as may be necessary to make it easier to write and more perfect than it is, so as to represent the sounds not expressed by the existing letters.

"Such a change is necessary if inter-provincial contacts are to increase and if Hindi is to be the medium of communication between provinces. The second was over an accepted proposition for the past twenty-five years with those who subscribe to the creed of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. The question of script has often been discussed but never seriously tackled. And yet it seems to be a natural corollary to the first proposition. Learning sister languages becomes incredibly simple and easy. *Gitanjali*, written in the Bengali script, is a sealed book to everyone except the Bengalis. It is almost an open book when it is written in the Devanagari script. There is in it a vast number of words derived from Sanskrit and easily understood by the people of the other provinces. Everyone can test the truth of this statement. We ought not unnecessarily to tax the future generations with the trouble of having to learn different scripts. It is cruel to require a person desiring to learn Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kanarese, Oriya and Bengali, to learn six scripts, besides Devanagari, let alone the Urdu script if he would know what the Muslim brethren are saying and doing through their writings. I have not presented an ambitious programme for a lover of his country or humanity. Today the impenetrable barrier of different scripts has made the learning of sister languages and the learning of Hindi by the sister provinces a needlessly heavy task. It will be for Kakasaheb's committee on the one hand to educate and canvass public opinion in favour of the reform, and on the other to demonstrate by practical application its great utility in saving the time and energy of those who would learn Hindi or the provincial languages. Let no one run away with the idea that the reform will diminish the importance of the provincial languages. Indeed it can only enrich them even as the adoption of one common script has enriched the languages of Europe by making the intercourse between its provinces easy."

The first All-India Village Industries Exhibition was opened by Gandhi at Indore in the same week. In a brief speech he said that

we who call ourselves civilized were entirely responsible for the ruin of our village industries, and their revival and restoration to them of their rightful place in our civilization depends on us. Exhibitions like the one he was asked to open, held in cities like Indore, were a means of opening the eyes of the city dweller to his duties to the villager, and they should also serve as links between these two vital limbs of our social being.

On April 23, addressing a meeting in Indore, he said:

"We may not know it, but it is certain that we are slowly perishing individually and as a nation. It is no use laying the blame at other people's door, the Government, the state, or the zamindar. They are certainly responsible for our sorry plight, but we are no less responsible, and we had better bethink ourselves of our responsibility.

"The reason why our average life-rate is deplorably low, the reason why we are getting more and more impoverished is that we have neglected our 700,000 villages. We have indeed thought of them, but only to the extent of exploiting them. We read thrilling accounts of the 'glory that was Ind', of the land that was flowing with milk and honey; but today it is a land of starving millions. We are sitting in this fine pandal under a blaze of electric lights, but we do not know that we are burning these lights at the expense of the poor. We have no right to use the lights if we forget that we owe these to them.

"There is a difference between the civilization of the East—the civilization of India—and that of the West. It is not generally realized wherein the difference lies. Our geography is different, our history is different, our ways of living are different. Our continent, though vast, is a speck on the globe, but it is the most thickly populated, barring China. Well, the economics and the civilization of a country where the pressure of population on land is greatest, are and must be different from those of a country where the pressure is the least. Sparsely populated America may have need of the machinery. India may not need it at all. Where there are millions upon millions of units of idle labour, it is no use thinking of labour-saving devices. If some one devised a machine which would save us the trouble of using our hands to eat, eating would cease to be a pleasure, it would become a torture. The reason of our poverty is the extinction of our industries and our consequent unemployment. Some years ago India's agricultural population was said to be 70 per cent. Today it is said to be 90 per cent. It does not mean that 90 per cent are

agriculturists, but that instead of 70 per cent who depended on land, 90 per cent are now driven to depend on land. In other words, whereas there were industries and crafts enough to feed the 20 per cent some time ago, they are no longer there and the people have thus been thrown on land. They thus steal their living, not because they want to, but because there is no more land.

"Not that there is not enough land to feed our thirty-five crores. It is absurd to say that India is overpopulated and that the surplus population must die. I am sure that if all the land that is available was properly utilized and made to yield up to its capacity, it would maintain the whole population. Only we have got to be industrious and to make two blades of grass grow where one grows today.

"The remedy is to identify ourselves with the poor villager and to help him make the land yield its plenty, help him produce what we need, confine ourselves to use what he produces, live as he lives, and persuade him to take to more rational ways of diet and living.

"We eat mill-ground flour, and even the poor villager walks with a head-load of half a maund grain to have it ground in the nearest flour-mill. Do you know that in spite of the plenty of foodstuffs we produce, we import wheat from outside and we eat the superfine flour from Australia? We will not use our hand-ground flour and the poor villager also foolishly copies us. We thus turn wealth into waste, nectar into poison. For whole meal is the proper meal. Mill-ground flour is vitaminless flour, mill-ground flour kept for days is not only vitaminless, but poison. But we will not exert ourselves to produce flour which we must eat fresh every day, and will pay for less nutritious things and purchase ill health in the bargain. This is not any obstruse economic truth, it is a fact which is daily happening before our eyes. The same is the case with rice and *gur* and oil. We will eat rice, polished of its substance, and eat less nutritious sugar and pay more for it than more nutritious *gur*. We have suffered the village oilman to be driven to extinction and we eat adulterated oils. We idolize the cow, but kill her by slow degrees. We eat honey and kill the honey bee, with the result that honey is such a rare commodity today that it is only available to a 'mahatma' like me or to those who must have it from the physician as a vehicle for the drugs he prescribes. If we took the trouble of learning scientific and harmless bee-keeping, we should get it cheaper and our children would get out of it all the carbohydrates they need. In all our dietetics we mistake

the shadow for the substance, preferring bone-white sugar to rich brown *gur* and pale white bread to rich brown bran-bread.

"We are said to be a nation of daily bathers. That we are to be sure, but we are none the better for it. For, we bathe with unclean water, we foul our tanks and rivers with filth, and use that water for drinking and bath. We lawyers and degree-holders and doctors will not learn the elementary principles of sanitation and hygiene. We have not yet devised the most economic method of disposal of our evacuation and we turn our open healthy spaces into the breeding-grounds of disease.

"I implore you to throw off your inertia, to bestir yourselves to study these elementary facts and live more rational lives and learn how to turn waste into wealth. I have told you simple truths which we would soon realize and act up to if we threw off the inertia of ages. But we have shunned body labour to the detriment of our brains, and thus rest content with the irrational ways of diet and living. Let us pull ourselves together and resolve to make our bodies and brains more active."

At Indore, Gandhi visited the Institute of Plant Industry, where experiments were conducted in the improvement of cotton and other seed, in the discovery of rich cattle foods, construction of cheap grass silos, preparation of different kinds of manures and discoveries helpful to cottage industries, such as that of the pulp contents of the different grasses in Central India. Whilst he showed great interest in all these, the main purpose of his visit was to study the method of sanitary disposal and agricultural utilization of habitation wastes by what is known as compost system.

"What is to be done with the night-soil?" was discussed by Gandhi in *Harijan*:

"Even during the rains villagers should perform functions in places not trodden by man. Faeces must be buried. This is a most difficult question owing to the erroneous training of villagers. In Sindi village we are trying to persuade the villagers not to use the streets, to go to the adjoining fields and to throw dry clean earth on their own evacuations. After two months' continuous labour and co-operation of the municipal councillors and others they have been good enough generally to cease to defile the streets. They go to the fields which their owners have been good enough to open for such use. But villagers still obstinately refuse to throw earth on their own evacuations.

'Surely this is bhangi's work; and it is sinful to look at faeces, more so to throw earth on them,' they say. They have been taught to believe so. Workers have, therefore, not to write on a clean slate. They have to rub off what is drawn into the slate with steel points. But I know that if we have faith in our mission, if we have patience enough to persist in the work of daily morning scavenging and, above all, if we don't get irritated against the villagers, their prejudice will disappear as mist before the rays of the sun. Age-hardened ignorance cannot yield to a few months' object-lessons."

On his return from Indore, the workers had in the ashram precinct a little experiment in bone-charring for the purpose of manufacturing manure. There was also the flaying of a dead bullock on the premises, in order to instruct the inmates in animal anatomy. So far as Gandhi was concerned, he gave an interview to Pierre Ceresole as the slow work proceeded, and attended to several other things. The interview went on for several days, and it continued even during their train journey to Bombay. The discussion centred round the communist viewpoint and Gandhian ideology.

Pierre Ceresole's tangible difficulty was how long one should wait in order to carry conviction to the rich.

"That is where I disagree with the communists," remarked Gandhi. "With me the ultimate test is non-violence. We have always to remember that even we were one day in the same position as the wealthy man. It has not been an easy process with us and as we bore with ourselves, even so should we bear with others. Besides, I have no right to assume that I am right and he is wrong. I have to wait till I convert him to my point of view. In the meanwhile if he says, 'I am prepared to keep for myself 25 per cent and to give 75 per cent to charities,' I close with the offer. For I know that 75 per cent voluntarily given is better than 100 per cent surrendered at the point of the bayonet, and by thus being satisfied with 75 per cent I render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Non-violence must be the common factor between us. You may argue that a man who surrenders by compulsion today will voluntarily accept the position tomorrow. That, to my mind, is a remote possibility on which I should not care to build much. What is certain is that if I use violence today, I shall be doubtless faced with greater violence. With non-violence as the rule, life will no doubt be a series of compromises. But it is better than an endless series of clashes."



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi and Thakkar Bapa in conference with Harijan workers, Delhi, January 1935

WARDHA.
16th, March, '35.

My Dear Anand and Bhakti,

Though you have given me a long love letter I can only dictate and then too be brief. Allow me to do so because I have hardly any time and because just now I can only write with the left hand. I have what may be called the writer's cramp. You will be surprised to learn that I have never been able to read Utopaa, though I have heard much in praise of it. We are getting on with village work and trying to convert the 13 acres of ground that Jamnalalji has given us in Wardha into a model village. We are very far from it. But we are only just settling down. You must some day, not very far, revisit India. You know that third class travelling is not so difficult and that it is comparatively cheaper.

I hope you are getting your "Harijan" regularly. Devadas is getting on very well. He and his wife are devoted to their baby.

Love to you both,

Bapu

Dr. Edmond Privat,
Bellavista,
Locarno, Switzerland.

Courtesy : Madame Privat

Gandhi's letter to Privat, 1935



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi at his meals, 1935

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi studying compost system at the Institute of Plant Industry, Indore, April 1935



Courtesy: Haffkine Institute

Gandhi discussing plague-control measures with Dr. Sokhey at the Haffkine Institute, Bombay, May 22, 1935





Photograph : Counsic Bros.

Gandhi with his co-workers, Borsad camp, May 1935





Photograph : Counsic Bros.

Gandhi's visit to plague-stricken villages in Borsad, May 1935



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi at the collector's office, Borsad, May 1935

"How would you in a word describe the rich man's legitimate position?"

"That of a trustee. I know a number of friends who earn and spend for the poor and who do not regard themselves as anything but the trustees of their wealth."

"I too have a number of friends, wealthy and poor. I do not possess wealth but accept money from my wealthy friends. How can I justify myself?"

"You will accept nothing for yourself personally. That is to say, you will not accept a cheque to go to Switzerland for a change but will accept a lakh of rupees for wells for Harijans or for schools and hospitals for them. All self has got to be eliminated and the problem is simplified."

"But what about my personal expense?"

"You have to act on the principle that a labourer is worthy of his hire. You must not hesitate to accept your minimum wage. Every one of us is doing the same thing. Bhansali's wage is just wheat flour and *neem* leaves. We cannot all be Bhansalis, but can endeavour to approximate to that life. Thus I will be satisfied with having my livelihood, but I must not ask a rich man to accommodate my son. My only concern is to keep my body and soul together so long as I serve the community."

"But so long as I draw that allowance from him, is it not my duty to remind him continually of the unenviableness of his position and to tell him that he must cease to be owner of all that he does not need for his bare living?"

"Oh yes, that is your duty."

"But there are wealthy and wealthy. There are some who may have made their pile from alcoholic traffic."

"Yes, you will certainly draw a line. But whilst you will not accept money from a brewer, I do not know what will happen if you have made an appeal for funds. Will you tell the people that only those who have justly earned their money will pay? I would rather withdraw the appeal than expect any money on those terms. Who is to decide whether one is just or otherwise? And justice too is a relative term. If we will but ask ourselves, we will find that we have not been just all our lives. The Gita says in effect that everyone is tarred with the same brush; so rather than judge others, live in the world untouched or unaffected by it. Elimination of self is the secret."

"Yes, I see," remarked Pierre Ceresole. "But one sometimes finds himself in a most embarrassing position. I have met people in Bihar working from morning until evening for less than a couple of annas, sometimes less than an anna, and they have often told me that they would very much like to dispossess the wealthy around them of their ill-gotten gains. I have stood speechless before them and have silenced them by reminding them of you."

Pierre's doubts were not all resolved. There were more questions from others that Gandhi had to answer in *Harijan*. Industrialization, observed the socialists, was the only solution for India's poverty and hunger, and Gandhi's attitude towards the machine was mediaeval. "Is not this wheel a machine?" Gandhi asked one of the critics. "I don't mean this machine, but I mean bigger machinery," he added. "Do you mean Singer's sewing machine? That too is protected by the village industries movement, and for that matter any machinery which does not deprive masses of men of the opportunity to labour, but which helps the individual and adds to his efficiency, and which a man can handle at will without being its slave."

"But what about the great inventions? You would have nothing to do with electricity?"

"Who said so? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the state would own power-houses just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is no electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do? Will you give them work, or would you have their owners cut them down for want of work? I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all. There is difference between invention and invention. I should not care for the asphyxiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time. The heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the state and used entirely for the benefit of the people. I can have no consideration for the machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of the many, or without cause to displace the useful labour of many. But even you as a socialist would not be in favour of an indiscriminate use of machinery. Take printing presses. They will go on. Take surgical instruments. How can one make them with one's hands? Heavy machinery would be needed for them. But there is no

machinery for the cure of idleness, but this," said Gandhi pointing to his spinning wheel. "I can work it whilst I am carrying on this conversation with you, and am adding a little to the wealth of the country. This machine no one can oust."

He paid a visit to Bombay for the purpose of seeing Kamala Nehru who sailed for Europe on May 23, on medical advice. He visited the Haffkine Institute to discuss plague-control measures with Dr. Sokhey, the director of the institute. The villages of Borsad, which were just emerging from plague, were his destination. On the eve of his departure from Bombay, he gave the following message at a prayer meeting:

"I am told that there is despair and depression everywhere, that there is disappointment all round as the gateway to jail is closed. People, I am told, do not know what to do. I do not know why, when there is the whole of constructive programme of work to do. When the programme of jail-going was on, there was room for hypocrisy, compulsion and violence. But the present constructive programme leaves no room for these. It leaves no room for disappointment and despair. The sky may be overcast today with clouds, but a fervent prayer to Him is enough to dispel them. It is because of prayer that I have known no disappointment. Though I have retired from the Congress, I have not closed my eyes or stopped my ears. I know all that is happening about me, and if anyone must give way to despair, it should be I. But I have known no despair. Why then should you give way to it? Let us pray that He may cleanse our hearts of pettinesses, meannesses and deceit, and He will surely answer our prayers. Many, I know, have turned to that unfailing source of strength.

"Swaraj is our birthright. No one can deprive us of it, unless we forfeit it ourselves. We have forfeited it and we have to win it back. Swaraj does not depend on jail-going. If it did, there are thousands of prisoners in jail today. It depends on everyone doing his or her own task. And that task has been shown to you. Go to the villages, identify yourselves with villagers, befriend the untouchables, make Hindu-Muslim unity a concrete fact. Do not despair although there may be Hindu-Muslim riots in the country, but go ahead with the work before you and be sure that He will pull you through."

For The Masses

1935

DURING THE last week of May 1935, Gandhi visited the villages of Borsad, where Sardar Patel with a corps of volunteers was trying to help the plague-stricken districts. Gandhi addressed ten meetings in villages and asked the people not to go to sleep over the flight of the enemy but to take permanent measures for destroying him: "Rats and fleas spread the infection and experts say that these have got to be exterminated. But rats and fleas are messengers of God. God speaks to us through them. In villages where nature has blessed you with the finest climate and healthiest soil, as I can see with my own eyes, you have so infringed nature's rules that plague seems to have come to stay. You may destroy some rats and fleas, but they have a knack of appearing again and again, if you do not make your houses and the surroundings inhospitable to them. A man like me wedded to non-violence would say that rats and fleas have as much right to live as I, and there is no reason why I should not exterminate myself rather than that I exterminate them. But I cannot reach that pitch of non-violence in this lifetime, may be in several lifetimes, nor perhaps can you. But you certainly can produce conditions where rats and fleas can never flourish. I want you to create those conditions. I want you to make the cleaning and scavenging campaign of these volunteers a permanent affair; I want you to break up your floors, break up rat nests and rat burrows, and construct floors where rats cannot make homes."

In Borsad, Gandhi made an elaborate plea for the performance of civic duties by the people. "It is a shame," he said, "that plague should have been endemic here for four years. Borsad proper has a population of 13,000, and the taluk has a population of 144,000 to deal with. It should not be impossible to abolish plague both from the town and the taluk. But you cannot do so with only six scavengers for the whole of the town. Unless you convert yourselves into bhangis,

unless all of you become voluntary scavengers, plague must come again, the Sardar's and his volunteers' efforts notwithstanding. Unless you follow up the work, it will be wasted. I have in the past come to you to congratulate you on the pluck with which you had fought during the civil disobedience movement and on your sufferings and sacrifice. But I have come to tell you today that it is not those who can fight Government that can govern themselves, but those who can show themselves to be equal to calamities like this. Let me tell you that ever since I learnt the word swaraj, I have been interesting myself in work of this kind. Ever since 1893 when my public life began my principal interest has been this kind of constructive work. The fight with Government came at a very late stage in life. But it may be said to be an edifice built on the sure foundation of solid constructive work done through several years. I have obeyed every municipal and civic law to the best of my ability, and even the Government that has often imprisoned me knows my capacity for obedience. I learnt scavenging for the first time in South Africa, and have ever been laying the greatest stress on the fact that it is work of this kind that qualifies one for swaraj. You will not say that after you have won swaraj you can go to sleep, unmindful of these problems. Swaraj is not absence of rule. You will have to tackle all these problems successfully even after you have won swaraj. Remember that the man who made the call for civil disobedience is making the call for work of this essential character. Even constructive work like production of khadi and revival of village industries cannot be done unless you have made your bodies and your homes proof against disease, and, therefore, this sanitation work is the very foundation of all constructive work."

During his eight days' stay in Borsad, Gandhi got a doctor to issue a series of leaflets on the elements of rat-proofing of houses and the disease-proofing of human bodies. As he said in one of his speeches: "A plague-infected man is worse than a plague-infected rat or flea, and unless you make your bodies proof against infection you cannot abolish these epidemics. Nature has endowed us all with enough capacity for the resistance of disease. It is we who, careless of her laws, have ruined that capacity. We have to regain it by healthy and hygienic ways of living and eating."

Gandhi had first thought of walking to all the villages from Borsad. But the Sardar's ill health made it impossible and he drove every

morning and evening to these villages. Three functions were pressed into a short hour in Nadiad—visit to a Montessori school and to a Harijan temple, and opening of a girls' school.

Gandhi paid a tribute to Phulchand Shah in whose memory the Montessori school had been opened and to Mohanlal Pandya who had died recently. Both were silent workers of the type that he had held up before Gujarat all these years and both had died in harness. But the memorials in brick and mortar or stone were no permanent memorials, a true memorial would be to replace these workers fittingly. As the royal throne was never empty and in the same breath as one mourned the death of a king one also exclaimed "Long live the King", even so should the throne of national service be never empty. Shakespeare had said that "the evil that a man does lives after him, the good is oft interred with his bones." Shakespeare had not given expression here to a universal truth, but he had criticized a tendency in human nature. Really speaking nature consumes all dirt and evil, giving to the world only the flower and the fruit. We had, therefore, to forget the shortcomings of our departed leaders and to treasure their virtues. That was the only way in which the world could add to its heritage.

He spoke on the Montessori system. Montessori herself had paid him a compliment that he gratefully appropriated, namely, that he had lived all his life the principles on which the system was based. And as one claiming to know the principles he would say that it was no use keeping the children in cotton wool, and that it was monstrous to think that Rs. 50 were being wasted monthly over bringing the children from their homes to the school. It was no use slavishly copying the models and it behoved the teachers to fetch these little tots to school on foot. It was not too much to expect infants over two and a half years to walk a mile.

Speaking on girls' education, Gandhi asked those who endlessly talked of girls' education whether they had themselves done their duty by their own daughters and sisters and mothers. If they had not done so, they had no right to talk of women's education. They had gathered that day to open a girls' school in memory of Vithalbhai Patel. No memorial could be fitting to him, unless it was as wide in its outlook as was the width of Vithalbhai's patriotism. The memorial was being raised by the *patidars* who claimed Vithalbhai Patel as their casteman, but he would tell them that the late leader belonged to no

caste and no creed. His creed was nationalism, and the bhangi was to him as dear as a *patidar*, or a Muslim or a Christian. They could not, therefore, raise a true memorial to him, unless their aim was to produce women who would dedicate their lives to the service of all Indians, without distinction of caste or creed. That must be an ideal which the trustees would have always to keep before them.

Gandhi's Borsad campaign, endorsing the destruction of rats and fleas, was marked out for criticism in some Indian and foreign papers. He dealt with it in *Harijan* under "All Life is One":

"During my brief visit to Borsad, in several of my speeches I had said that, although I believed that even plague-stricken rats and fleas were my kindred and had as much right to live, I had no hesitation in endorsing Dr. Bhaskar Patel's campaign against rats and fleas.

"I was in the midst of a population which would not kill the wild animals that daily destroy their crops. Before the Sardar threw the whole weight of his tremendous influence into the campaign of the destruction of rats and fleas, the people of the Borsad taluk had not destroyed a single rat or flea. But they could not resist the Sardar to whom they had owed much, and Dr. Bhaskar Patel was allowed to carry on wholesale destruction of rats and fleas. I was in daily touch with what was going on in Borsad.

"The Sardar had invited me naturally to endorse what had been done. For the work had still to continue, though henceforth with the people's own unaided effort. Therefore, in order to emphasize my endorsement, I redeclared in the clearest possible terms my implicit belief in ahimsa, that is, sacredness and kinship of all life.

"But why this contradiction between belief and action? Contradiction is undoubtedly there. Life is an aspiration. Its mission is to strive after perfection which is self-realization. The ideal must not be lowered because of our weaknesses or imperfections. I am painfully conscious of both in me. Silent cry daily goes out to Truth to help me to remove these weaknesses and imperfections of mine. I own my fear of snakes, scorpions, lions, tigers, plague-stricken rats and fleas, even as I must own fear of evil-looking robbers and murderers. I know that I ought not to fear them. But this is no intellectual feat. It is a feat of the heart. It needs more than a heart of oak to shed all fear except the fear of God. I could not in my weakness ask the people of Borsad not to kill deadly rats and fleas. But I know that it was a concession to human weakness.

"Nevertheless there is that difference between a belief in ahimsa and a belief in *himsa* which there is between north and south, life and death. One who hooks his fortune to ahimsa, the law of love, daily lessens the circle of destruction and to that extent promotes life and love; he who swears by *himsa*, the law of hate, daily widens the circle of destruction and to that extent promotes death and hate. Though, before the people of Borsad, I endorsed the destruction of rats and fleas, my own kith and kin, I preached to them without adulteration the grand doctrine of the eternal law of love of all life. Though I may fail to carry it out to the full in this life, my faith in it shall abide. Every failure brings me nearer the realization."

On his way back to Wardha, Gandhi went to Sabarmati to visit Ghaffar Khan in the jail. He had not been to Sabarmati, since the day he had marched down the road to Dandi from the Satyagraha Ashram and vowed never to return until swaraj was won. On leaving the jail he was persuaded to see the Harijan school attached to the ashram. Gandhi talked to the children, asking them about their work, who were their teachers, what they were taught. "Carding," said one. "Spinning," said another. "Music," said a third. "Breakfast," said a fourth. "That must be a very good teacher indeed," exclaimed Gandhi and all broke into laughter. At last it was time to go. "So our play is finished," said Gandhi, "and I shall say good-bye. Shall I?"

"No, no," exclaimed the children.

"Why? Do you want to ask me anything? Out with it."

"Tell us why you did not stay with us?"

"Because you did not invite me, and Budhabhai did."

"We too would have invited you. But you will not stay with us. Tell us why not?"

"I shall stay with you when you have won swaraj."

"It was all right so long as it was your ashram," argued one of the girls. "You would not stay in our own ashram again, until you had swaraj. It is the Harijan ashram. Why will you not stay with us?"

Gandhi laughed heartily and said: "Well, when I come next time, you will give me the invitation."

Almost immediately after the Borsad tour, there was the news of earthquake in Quetta on May 31. About 25,000 people perished in the twinkling of an eye, of whom the vast majority lay buried in the ruins of their houses. "Let us pray," advised Gandhi in *Harijan*:

"When a man is down, he prays to God to lift him up. He is the help of the helpless, says a Tamil proverb. The appalling disaster in Quetta paralyses one. It baffles all attempt at reconstruction. The whole truth about the disaster will perhaps never be known. The dead cannot be recalled to life.

"Human effort must be there always. Those who are left behind must have help. Such reconstruction as is possible will no doubt be undertaken. All this and much more along the same line can never be a substitute for prayers.

"But why pray at all? Does not God, if there be one, know what has happened? Does He stand in need of prayer to enable Him to do His duty?

"No, God needs no reminder. He is within everyone. Nothing happens without His permission. Our prayer is a heart search. It is a reminder to ourselves that we are helpless without His support. No effort is complete without prayer, without a definite recognition that the best human endeavour is of no effect if it has not God's blessing behind it. Prayer is a call to humility. It is a call to self-purification, to inward search.

"I must repeat what I said at the time of the Bihar disaster. There is a divine purpose behind every physical calamity. That, perfected science will one day be able to tell us beforehand when earthquakes will occur, as it tells us today of eclipses, is quite possible. It will be another triumph of the human mind. But such triumphs even indefinitely multiplied can bring about no purification of self without which nothing is of any value.

"Of course, we will forget this latest calamity as we have forgotten the Bihar one. I ask those who appreciate the necessity of inward purification to join in the prayer that we may read the purpose of God behind such visitations, that they may humble us and prepare us to face our Maker whenever the call comes, and that we may be ever ready to share the sufferings of our fellows whoever they may be."

Bihar earthquake was characterized by Gandhi as a punishment for the sin of untouchability. "For what sin must the more terrible earthquake of Quetta be?" asked a critic. Gandhi replied:

"What I said about Bihar was deliberately said even as the lines on Quetta were deliberately written. This call to prayer is a definite yearning of the soul. Prayer is a sign of repentance, a desire to become better, purer. A man of prayer regards what are known as physical

calamities as divine chastisement. It is a chastisement alike for individuals and for nations. All chastisements do not equally startle people. Some affect only the individuals, some others affect groups or nations only mildly. Disasters like Quetta stun us. Familiarity with ordinary everyday calamities breeds contempt for them. If earthquakes were a daily occurrence, we would take no notice of them. Even this Quetta one has not caused in us the same disturbance that the Bihar one did.

"But it is the universal experience that every calamity brings any sensible man down on his knees. He thinks that it is God's answer to his sins and that he must henceforth behave better. His sins have left him hopelessly weak, and in his weakness he cries out to God for help. Thus have millions of human beings used their personal calamities for self-improvement. Nations too have been known to invoke the assistance of God when calamities have overtaken them. They have abased themselves before God and have appointed days of humiliation, prayer and purification.

"I have suggested nothing new or original. In these days of fashionable disbelief, it does need some courage to call men and women to repentance. But I can claim no credit for courage. For my weaknesses or idiosyncrasies are well known. If I had known Quetta, as I know Bihar and the Biharis, I would certainly have mentioned the sins of Quetta, though they might be no more its specialities than untouchability was Bihar's. Be we all—the rulers and the ruled—know that we have many sins, personal and national to answer for. The call is to all these to repentance, prayer and humiliation. True prayer is not a prelude to inaction. It is a spur to ceaseless and selfless action. Purification is never for the selfishly idle, it accrues only to the selflessly industrious."

Quetta was under complete occupation of the army and no outsider was allowed to enter it without the Government's permission. Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad were refused permission on the ground that there was nothing for private relief workers to do there.

At Wardha Gandhi was trying to solve greater calamity than that of Quetta, the chronic poverty of India's millions. He guided village uplift movement through *Harijan* and day-to-day activities at the ashram. On June 29 he wrote on "Duty of Bread Labour":

"Brahma created his people with the duty of sacrifice laid upon them and said, 'By this do you flourish. Let it be the fulfiller of all your desires.' 'He who eats without performing this sacrifice eats

stolen bread'—thus says the Gita. 'Earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow,' says the Bible. Sacrifices may be of many kinds. One of them may well be bread labour. If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Then there would be no cry of overpopulation, no disease, and no such misery as we see around. Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice. Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love, for the common good. There will then be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable.

"This may be an unattainable ideal. But we need not cease to strive for it. Even if without fulfilling the whole law of sacrifice, that is, the law of our being, we performed physical labour enough for our daily bread, we should go a long way towards the ideal.

"If we did so, our wants would be minimized, our food would be simple. We should then eat to live, not live to eat. Let anyone who doubts the accuracy of this proposition try to sweat for his bread; he will derive the greatest relish from the productions of his own labour, improve his health and discover that many things that he took were superfluities.

"May not men earn their bread by intellectual labour? No. The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's ' perhaps applies here well.

"Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payment. In the ideal state, doctors, lawyers and the like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self. Obedience to the law of bread labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by a struggle for mutual service. The law of the brute will be replaced by the law of man.

"Return to the villages means a definite voluntary recognition of the duty of bread labour and all it connotes. But, says the critic, 'millions of India's children are today living in villages and yet they are living a life of semi-starvation.' This, alas, is but too true. Fortunately we know that theirs is not voluntary obedience. They would perhaps shirk body labour if they could, and even rush to the nearest city if they could be accommodated in it. Compulsory obedience to a master is a state of slavery, willing obedience to one's father is the glory of sonship. Similarly compulsory obedience to the law of bread

labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment and health. And it is health which is real wealth, not pieces of silver and gold. The Village Industries Association is an experiment in willing bread labour."

While Gandhi advised the well-placed people to sacrifice comfort and higher remunerations, he pleaded for better wages for the village artisans: "We have exploited the poor patient villagers far too long. Let not the A.-I.V.I.A. intensify the exploitation under the guise of philanthropy. Its aim is not to produce village articles as cheap as possible; it is to provide the workless villagers with work at a living wage. The most difficult question to determine would be the minimum or the living wage. I have suggested eight annas for eight hours' strenuous labour, converted into a given quantity of the particular goods, turned out by the artisan of good ability." The same advice he tendered to the All-India Spinners' Association.

Ever since he wrote his article on a standard wage for the artisans, especially for the spinners, reorganization of khadi production came into fore. Trifles had served as a spark to set his heart ablaze and he could not be at peace unless proper justice was done: (1) The discovery by an intimate worker, who visited the famous spinning and weaving centre at Savli, that the spinners who spent the whole day plying their wheels did not get more than two pies per hour; (2) A poor man who had purchased a piece of khadi found that it was tearing to pieces after one or two washings. The constant and vexatious disputes between several khadi workers confirmed his growing belief that commercial khadi was at the root of the trouble.

There was no question of conscious or deliberate injustice. Everything was being done with a view to finding work for the workless, and the scramble for reduction in prices was due to the unnatural competition with mill cloth. Would not thousands be thrown out of employment, first, by the high prices affecting the demand for khadi, and secondly, by enforcing rigid tests on them? "In Bihar something like five thousand women walk ten miles a day to receive the present scanty wage. More would come, if we could sell more khadi. What would happen to these poor women, if the demand for khadi disappeared?" This was one of the questions. "Quite right," Gandhi replied, "I know the same is the state of things in Bengal villages and in South India. But I would put your proposition in a converse way. Supposing you gave one pie instead of two pies an hour that you

give at present, you would be employing not 5,000 women but 10,000 women. And supposing these helpless women were ready to accept even that miserable pittance, would you dare to do it? I say, you would not. That means you will have to determine a point beyond which you cannot go. Call it if you like a 'helpless minimum'. But if that minimum has to be fixed, why not fix it once and for all, no matter whether it affects some of the producers for the time being adversely? So long as the number of purchasers is limited, and the number of producers unlimited, there is no doubt that you will have to turn some of the producers away. Why not have a deliberately fixed, high enough minimum wage, to ensure these poor women at least a living wage? Otherwise, there would be no end to this unconscious exploitation. A paper-manufacturer sends us paper from a place. He is paying the labourers at the rate of six pice per day, and says he hopes to make the paper cheaper. I tell him I will not have it cheaper."

"Then," objected a worker, "you will now change the definition of khadi. It no longer remains hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, but cloth hand-spun and hand-woven at a particular wage."

"There is no doubt. I am sorry that you are making the discovery so late," said Gandhi.

"But spinning is a supplementary occupation, we have been telling the world all these years. It is done only in one's spare hours."

"Yes and no," said Gandhi. "I know that here are thousands who are doing it for the whole day. To them it is not a supplementary but a substantive occupation. And even if it is not, why not give them for an hour's work, what you would usually give for any other hour's work?"

"Do you know that in some parts of Guntur district, people are taking to rice-pounding because it fetches them a higher wage than spinning?"

"I do. But you support my argument. They will certainly choose whatever work fetches them a higher wage. Then why not dignify the spinner by a wage which will be equal to any other wage?"

"Practical difficulties are very great," said the worker. "You cannot induce these spinners to conform to your terms. You want a regular register of them, you want them to spin yarn of a particular count of particular evenness and of particular strength. How will all that be done?"

"These difficulties have got to be conquered," said Gandhi. "Don't I know that for a considerable length of time there will be tales of long-drawn-out agony—some saying we cannot induce the spinners to spin for themselves, some saying we cannot get them to conform to our requirements?"

"But supposing they conform to our regulations, and we give them better machines and better spindles, they will automatically do more work and more than double the wage."

"That they will do automatically but for no virtue of yours," said Gandhi. "That more production means more earning is obvious enough. But what are we going to do by way of justice which we have denied them?"

"No," added Gandhi, "we shall have to forget that khadi has to compete with the mill cloth. The mill cloth producer will always concentrate on cheapening it, we must concentrate on justice and a fair wage. There can be, therefore, no comparison between the two. As regards the practical difficulties, let us reduce our establishments, let us stop advertisements, let us not patronize the private producer. It is going to be the test of those who are pledged to khadi. Let them produce khadi themselves or pay for it enough to give our brothers and sisters a living wage. Let us not forget that our mission is the service of Daridranarayan."

It required very detailed and elaborate calculation and experiment to fix a fair wage. Many experts, among them Vinoba Bhave, made experiments by spinning eight hours every day themselves. An average was found and calculation arrived at by which the wages for spinning different qualities of yarn were fixed so that a spinner could earn a living wage. It was found impossible to increase the wages to eight annas but it was decided to raise them to three annas a day, and to study the effect of this increase on the production and the sale of khadi.

The orientation in wages brought to the forefront the question of raising the quality of the products. Gandhi wrote articles on how to improve the manufacture of khadi and other village industries. In the Wardha ashram, Vinoba Bhave looked after the spinning section and Gandhi instructed the inmates in sandal-making: "The strips should be here, and the stitches should be there, and there should be cross pieces of leather on the sole where the pressure is the greatest." Gandhi showed the defects and had them rectified in his presence.

"But the shoemakers are trenching on our time," complained the Working Committee members who had come for his advice. "Don't grudge them the lesson they are having," exclaimed Gandhi, "and if you like you may also watch how a good sandal is made." Sardar Patel jokingly remarked, "Is there anything in which you will confess that you are not an expert?"

There was another surprise in store for the Working Committee members. They were alarmed to find Gandhi with a poisonous snake coiled round his neck attending to a man who claimed to teach the handling of snakes and the cure of bites. For the latter part of the demonstration someone had to be bitten and Gandhi volunteered. But this his companions would not endure and the experiment was given up.

The Working Committee which met at Wardha on August 1 had nothing much to discuss. The work in the Legislative Assembly was encouraging but the jails still held hundreds of political prisoners including Jawaharlal Nehru and the Khan brothers. The impending reforms did not enthuse anyone. And actually the passage of the Government of India Act of 1935, which obtained the royal assent on August 2, hardly received any notice. According to the said act, which laid down a new constitution for India, there was a measure of provincial autonomy, with numerous safeguards and federation between the provinces and the Indian states. The act met with widespread opposition in India and the Congress totally rejected it. The safeguards and the special powers in the hands of the Governors and the Viceroy were especially objected to as taking the substance out of the provincial autonomy; the federation was even more strongly opposed, as this perpetuated the autocratic regime in the Indian states and brought about an unnatural union between the feudal units and the semi-democratic provinces. A communal arrangement was also made a part of the new constitution, which created numerous separate electorates.

Harijan made no reference to the act. Gandhi went on with his village work. Addressing the A.-I.V.I.A. board meeting held at the end of August, he remarked: "Let us realize our amazing limitations. Do not mind if we have to be like the three tailors of Tooley Street. Our resources are few and limited. We cannot afford to squander money on the high-sounding schemes and we cannot adopt any and every means. We may fail to get able workers and agents, and our

branches have to be few and far between. But I am in no hurry to see network of institutions all over the country. Ours is a policy of ploughing lonely furrow."

At the beginning of September, a meeting of the executive of Harijan Sevak Sangh was held at Wardha and the following resolution was passed: "Resolved the efforts be made for the co-ordination of the activities of the Charkha, Gram Udyog and Harijan Sevak Sanghs." Gandhi looked at the new movement as one whole: "Khadi service, village service and Harijan service are one in reality, though three in name. And they are purely humanitarian services with no other aim than that of serving the Daridranarayans. Their service necessarily includes that of all. A cup of water served to Harijan is a cup served to all the neglected ones of humanity."

Gandhi pinned himself down to Wardha. His correspondence increased to such an extent that he informed private correspondents not to be surprised, "if they find that they no longer hear from him directly or that their letters remain unanswered or are answered on his behalf." He feared a breakdown in his health. The sixty-fifth birthday greetings he acknowledged in *Harijan* in a short note entitled "Thanks." "My mind is living in the villages," he observed. "They are calling me to bury myself in them."

Non-violence, Gandhi claimed, was at the root of his activities. There was communal strife in India between the Hindus and the Muslims, and he owned defeat on that score, at least for the time being. His message of peace was not confined to India, and his mind was much agitated over the aggressive spirit of Hitlerite Germany, Fascist Italy and bullying Japan. He recognized that non-violence to be a creed has to be all-pervasive. He had read Mr. Amery's statement defending the Japanese aggression: "Our whole policy in India, our whole policy in Egypt stand condemned if we condemn Japan." Abyssinia was the latest instance; she was attacked by Mussolini on Gandhi's birthday. The Italian invasion of Abyssinia moved Gandhi to write a message for an American periodical—one of the first of his appeals against the new wave of darkness that was to sweep the whole world:

"Not to believe in the possibility of permanent peace is to disbelieve in the godliness of human nature. Methods hitherto adopted have failed because rock-bottom sincerity on the part of those who have striven has been lacking. Not that they have realized this lack.



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi and Kasturbai during their morning walk, Wardha, 1935

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

At Wardha, August 1935

Photograph: Counsic Bros.

Gandhi, Nehru, and Azad checking the time, Wardha, August 1935

My dear Charlie,

You must take the burden of Gurudev's requirements on your mind. I quite agree that he must not go out on a begging mission. I will see what is possible for me to do.

Of course you should give up the rush and devote yourself to writing not magazine articles but things of permanent value.

And you must avoid starches and much protein. Fruits and raw milk, raw eggs are the things for you.

28 8/35 Love
Wardha Mohan

Gandhi's letter to Andrews, dated Wardha, August 28, 1935

Dear Gurudev

Your touching letter was received only on 11th inst when I was in the midst of meetings. In the hope of delivering it to me personally Nil needlessly detained it. I hope he is now quite restored to health.

Yes I have the financial position before me now. You may depend upon my straining every nerve to find the required money. I am groping. I am trying to find the way out. It will take some time before I can report the result of my search to you.

It is unthinkable that you should have to undertake another begging mission at your age. The necessary funds must come to you without your having to stir out of Santiniketan.

I hope you are keeping well. Pt. Malaviyaji who was with you a few days ago, is here for the day & has been telling me how you have aged.

With reverential love

Yours,

M. K. Gandhi

Wardha

13th Oct '35

Courtesy: Visva-Bharati

Gandhi's letter to Tagore, dated Wardha, October 13, 1935



Harrison for the Review of Reviews] [London

Owing to world-wide popularity, most of the principal players will be in the new 1935 *production*

From a foreign caricature, 1935

M.C.C. Touring Team
1933-34.

1. D. R. Jardine
2. C. F. Walters
3. B. H. Valentine
4. H. Elliott.
5. E. W. Clark
6. L. Townsend.
7. H. Verity
8. A. Mitchell.
9. C. F. Barnett
10. C. S. Marriott.
11. [illegible]
12. M. S. Nichols
13. A. H. Bakewell
14. [illegible]
15. J. Langridge
16. J. H. [illegible]
17. [illegible]

Courtesy : Laxmi Merchant

Gandhi adds his name as the seventeenth player of the M.C.C. touring team in India : a page from an autograph book, 1935



Courtesy: Visva-Bharati

Gandhi's sketch by a Chinese artist

Peace is unobtainable by part performance of conditions, even as chemical combination is impossible without complete fulfilment of the conditions of attainment thereof. If the recognized leaders of mankind, who have control over energies of destruction, were wholly to renounce their use with full knowledge of the implications, permanent peace can be obtained. This is clearly impossible without the great powers of the earth renouncing their imperialistic designs. This again seems impossible without these great nations ceasing to believe in soul-destroying competition and the desire to multiply wants and, therefore, increase their material possessions. It is my conviction that the root of the evil is want of a living faith in a living God. It is a first-class human tragedy that peoples of the earth, who claim to believe in the message of Jesus, whom they describe as the Prince of Peace, show little of that belief in actual practice. It is painful to see sincere Christian divines limiting the scope of Jesus' message to select individuals. I have been taught from my childhood and I have tested the truth by experience that the primary virtues of mankind are possible of cultivation by the meanest of the human species. If even one nation were unconditionally to perform the supreme act of renunciation, many of us would see in our lifetime visible peace established on earth."

Gandhi discussed non-violence, "the greatest force," in *Harijan* of October 12:

"Non-violence to be a creed has to be all-pervasive. I cannot be non-violent about one activity of mine, and violent about others. That would be a policy, not a life-force. That being so, I cannot be indifferent about the war that Italy is now waging against Abyssinia. But I have resisted most pressing invitations to express my opinion and give a lead to the country. Self-suppression is often necessary in the interest of truth and non-violence. If India had as a nation imbibed the creed of non-violence, corporate or national, I should have had no hesitation in giving a lead. But in spite of a certain hold I have on the millions of this country, I know the very grave and glaring limitations of that hold. India has an unbroken tradition of non-violence from times immemorial. But at no time in her ancient history, as far as I know it, has it had complete non-violence in action pervading the whole land. Nevertheless, it is my unshakable belief that the destiny of India is to deliver the message of non-violence to mankind. It may take ages to come to fruition. But so far as I

can judge, no other country will precede her in the fulfilment of that mission."

"If Abyssinia were non-violent," Gandhi said, "she would have no arms, would want none. She would make no appeal to the League or any other power for an armed intervention. She would never give any cause for complaint. And Italy would find nothing to conquer if the Abyssinians would not offer armed resistance, nor would they give co-operation, willing or forced. Italian occupation in that case would mean that of the land without its people. That, however, is not Italy's exact object. She seeks submission of the people of that beautiful land."

Gandhi's efforts to help the Depressed Classes continued unabated. But Dr. Ambedkar and his followers were not satisfied. At Nasik, on October 13, the Depressed Class Conference adopted the resolution recommending a complete severance of the Depressed Classes from the Hindu fold and embracing any other religion guaranteeing equal status and treatment with the other members of faith. To symbolize their decision to leave the Hindu fold, 800 Harijan youths performed the "obsequies" of Hinduism, by burning the *Manu Smriti* and other Hindu scriptures upholding untouchability. In a statement to the press Gandhi said:

"The speech attributed to Dr. Ambedkar seems unbelievable. If, however, he has made such a speech and the conference adopted a resolution of complete severance and acceptance of any faith that would guarantee equality to Harijans, I regard both as unfortunate events, especially when one notices, that in spite of isolated events to the contrary, untouchability is on its last legs. I can understand the anger of a high-souled and a highly educated person like Dr. Ambedkar over atrocities such as were committed in Kavitha and other villages. But religion is not like a house or a cloak, which can be changed at will. It is a more integral part of one's self than one's body. Religion is the tie that binds one to one's Creator, and whilst the body perishes, as it has to, religion persists even after death. If Dr. Ambedkar had faith in God, I would urge him to assuage his wrath and reconsider the position, and examine his ancestral religion on its own merits, not through the weakness of its faithless followers. Lastly, I am convinced that the change of faith by him and by those who passed the resolution will not serve the cause which they have at heart; for, millions of unsophisticated, illiterate Harijans will not

listen to him and to them, when they have disowned their ancestral faith, especially when it is remembered that their lives, for good or for evil, are intertwined with those of Caste Hindus."

Gandhi summed up his own attitude under "Caste has to go":

"(1) I believe in Varnashram of the Vedas which, in my opinion, is based on absolute equality of status, notwithstanding the passages to the contrary in the Smritis and elsewhere. (2) Every word of the printed works passing muster as the shastras is not, in my opinion, a revelation. (3) The interpretation of accepted texts has undergone evolution and is capable of indefinite evolution, even as the human intellect and heart are. (4) Nothing in the shastras which is manifestly contrary to universal truths and morals can stand. (5) Nothing in the shastras which is capable of being reasoned can stand if it is in conflict with reason. (6) Varnashram of the shastras is today non-existent in practice. (7) The present caste system is the very antithesis of Varnashram. The sooner public opinion abolishes it the better. (8) In Varnashram there was and should be no prohibition of intermarriage or inter-dining. Prohibition there is of change of one's hereditary occupation for purposes of gain. The existing practice is, therefore, doubly wrong in that it has set up cruel restrictions about inter-dining and intermarriage and tolerates anarchy about choice of occupation. (9) Though there is in Varnashram no prohibition against intermarriage and inter-dining there can be no compulsion. It must be left to the unfettered choice of the individual, as to where he or she will marry or dine. If the law of Varnashram is observed there would naturally be a tendency, so far as marriage is concerned, for the people to restrict the marital relations to their own *varna*. (10) There is no such thing as untouchability in the Hindu shastras. (11) The most effective, the quickest, and the most unobtrusive way to destroy caste is for reformers to begin the practice with themselves and, where necessary, take the consequences of social boycott. The reform will not come by reviling the orthodox. The change will be gradual and imperceptible. The so-called higher classes will have to descend from their pedestal before they can make any impression upon the so-called lower classes. Day-to-day experience of the village work shows how difficult the task is of bridging the gulf that exists between the city dwellers and the villagers, the higher classes and the lower classes. The two are not synonymous terms. For the class distinction exists both in the cities and the villages."

The solution of all the problems Gandhi saw in shedding "fear complex". He wrote in *Harijan* of November 23:

"Many workers are so frightened of village life that they fear that if they are not paid by some agency they will not be able to earn their living by labouring in villages, especially if they are married and have a family to support. In my opinion this is a demoralizing belief. No doubt, if a person goes to a village with the city mentality and wants to live in villages the city life, he will never earn enough unless he, like the city people, exploits the villagers. But if a person settles in a village and tries to live like the villagers, he should have no difficulty in making a living by the sweat of his brow. He should have confidence that if the villagers who are prepared to toil all the year round in the traditional unintelligent manner can earn their living, he must also earn at least as much as the average villager. This he will do without displacing a single villager, for he will go to a village as a producer, not as a parasite . . .

"The fact is the villagers have lost all hope. They suspect that every stranger's hand is at their throats and that he goes to them only to exploit them. The divorce between intellect and labour has paralysed their thinking faculty. Their working hours they do not use to the best advantage. The worker should enter such villages full of love and hope, feeling sure that where men and women labour unintelligently and remain unemployed half the year round, he working all the year round and combining labour with intelligence cannot fail to win the confidence of the villagers and earn his living honestly and well by labouring in their midst.

" 'But what about my children and their education?' says the candidate worker. If the children are to receive their education after the modern style, I can give no useful guidance. But if it be deemed enough to make them healthy, sinewy, honest, intelligent villagers, any day able to earn their livelihood in the home of their parents' adoption, they will have their all-round education under the parental roof and withal they will be partly earning members of the family from the very moment they reach the years of understanding and are able to use their hands and feet in a methodical manner. There is no school equal to a decent home and no teachers equal to honest virtuous parents. Modern high school education is a dead weight on the villagers. Their children will never be able to get it, and thank God they will never miss it, if they have the training of the decent

home. If the village worker is not a decent man or woman, conducting a decent home, he or she had better not aspire after the high privilege and honour of becoming a village worker."

Gandhi was overworking himself for a long time, and in December his health broke down. For several months he had been in the habit of starting work at two in the morning and carrying it on until eight or nine in the evening, with very brief intervals of sleep or rest. He had been obliged to carry on serious conversation during meals and very often also during his morning and evening walks. Now all engagements and interviews had to be stopped, though people from far-off countries came to Wardha to see him. The Japanese poet, Yone Noguchi, was allowed to see him for a short while and found him lying in his bed with a wet-earth bandage round his head. Gandhi explained with a smile, "I sprang from the Indian earth and so it is Indian earth that crowns me."

The Indian National Congress completed the fiftieth year of its existence on December 28, 1935. The occasion was celebrated everywhere amidst scenes of great enthusiasm.

Gandhi, explaining his silence over political matters, wrote: "He who is not ready for small reforms will never be ready for great reforms. He who makes the best of his faculties will go on augmenting them, and he will find that what once seemed to him a great reform was really a small one. He who orders his life in this way leads a truly natural life. One must forget the political goal in order to realize it. To think in terms of the political goal in every matter and at every step is to raise unnecessary dust. Why worry one's head over a thing that is inevitable? Why die before one's death?

"That is why I can take the keenest interest in discussing vitamins and leafy vegetables and unpolished rice. That is why it has become a matter of absorbing interest to me to find out how best to clean our latrines, how best to save our people from the heinous sin of fouling Mother Earth every morning. I do not quite see how thinking of these necessary problems and finding a solution for them has no political significance and how an examination of the financial policy of the Government has necessarily a political bearing. What I am clear about is that the work I am doing now and asking the masses to do is such as can be done by the millions of people, whereas the work of examining the policy of our rulers will be beyond them. That it is a few people's business, I will not dispute. Let those who are qualified

to do so, do it as best they can. But until these leaders can bring great changes into being, why should not millions like me use the gifts that God has given them to the best advantage? Why should they not clear their own doors and environments of dirt and filth? Why should they be always in the grip of disease and incapable of helping themselves or anyone else?

"No, I am afraid the correspondent's question betrays his laziness and despair and the depression that has overtaken many of us. I can confidently claim that I yield to no one in my passion for freedom. No fatigue or depression has seized me. Many years' experience has convinced me that the activities that absorb my energies and attention are calculated to achieve the nation's freedom, that therein lies the secret of non-violent freedom. That is why I invite everyone, men and women, young and old, to contribute his or her share to the great sacrifice."

Conquest Of Self

1936

GANDHI continued to suffer from high blood pressure and for days together Jamnalal Bajaj stood guard at the Wardha ashram protecting him from the visitors. In the middle of January 1936, however, Mrs. Margaret Sanger, leader of the birth control movement, was permitted to interview him. Gandhi revealed himself inside out, giving Mrs. Sanger a very intimate glimpse of his own private life. He also declared to her his own limitations, especially the limitation of his own philosophy of life, self-realization through self-control, and said that from him there could be but one solution and one alone, "I could not recommend the remedy of birth control to a woman who wanted my approval. I should simply say to her: 'My remedy is of no use to you. You must go to others for advice.'" Mrs. Sanger cited some hard cases. "I agree," said Gandhi, "there are hard cases. Else birth control enthusiasts would have no case. But I would say, do devise remedies by all means, but the remedies should be other than the ones you advise. If you and I, as moral reformers, put our foot down on this remedy and said, 'You must fall back on other remedies,' those would surely be found."

"My wife," said Gandhi, "I made the orbit of all women. In her I studied all women. I came in contact with many European women in South Africa, and I knew practically every Indian woman there. I worked with them. I tried to show them they were not slaves either of their husbands or parents, not only in the political field but in the domestic as well. But the trouble was that some could not resist their husbands. The remedy is in the hands of women themselves. The struggle is difficult for them, and I do not blame them. I blame the men. Men have legislated against them. Man has regarded woman as his tool. She has learnt to be his tool and in the end found it easy and pleasurable to be such, because when one drags another in his fall the descent is easy. I have felt that during the years still left to me

if I can drive home to women's minds the truth that they are free, we will have no birth control problem in India. If they will only learn to say 'no' to their husbands, when they approach them carnally. I do not suppose that all husbands are brutes and if women only know how to resist them, all will be well. I have been able to teach women who have come in contact with me how to resist their husbands. The real problem is that many do not want to resist them. No resistance bordering upon bitterness will be necessary, in ninety-nine out of hundred cases. If a wife says to her husband, 'No, I do not want it,' he will make no trouble. But she has not been taught. Her parents in most cases will not teach it to her. There are some cases, I know, in which parents have appealed to their daughters' husbands not to force motherhood on their daughters. I have come across amenable husbands too. I want woman to learn the primary right of resistance. She thinks now that she has not got it."

Mrs. Sanger raised the issue of "irritations, disputes, and thwarted longings" that Gandhi's advice would bring into the home, of the absence of "loving glances" and of "tender good-night kisses" and of "words of endearment". She cited cases of nervous and mental breakdowns as a result of the practice of self-control. Gandhi spoke from a knowledge of the numerous letters he received very often; he said to her that "the evidence is all based on examination of imbeciles. The conclusions are not drawn from the practice of healthy-minded people. The people they take for examples have not lived a life of even tolerable continence. These neurologists assume that the people are expected to exercise self-restraint, while they continue to lead the same ill-regulated life. The consequence is that they do not exercise self-restraint but become lunatics. I carry on correspondence with many of these people and they describe their own ailments to me. I simply say that if I were to present them with this method of birth control they would lead far worse lives."

Both seemed to agree that woman should be emancipated, that woman should be the arbiter of her destiny. But Mrs. Sanger would have Gandhi work for woman's emancipation, through her pet device. "Sex love," she said, "is a relationship which makes for oneness, for completeness between husband and wife and contributes to a finer understanding and a greater spiritual harmony."

Gandhi said: "When both want to satisfy animal passion, without having to suffer the consequences of their act, it is not love, it is lust.

But if love is pure, it will transcend animal passion and will regulate itself. We have not had enough education of the passions. When a husband says, 'Let us not have children, let us have relations,' what is that but animal passion? If they do not want to have more children they should simply refuse to unite. Love becomes lust the moment you make it a means for the satisfaction of animal needs. It is just the same with food. If food is taken only for pleasure it is lust. You do not take chocolates for the sake of satisfying hunger. You take them for pleasure and then ask the doctor for an antidote. Perhaps you tell the doctor that whisky befogs your brain and he gives you an antidote. Would it not be better not to take chocolates or whisky?"

Mrs. Sanger said: "No. I do not accept the analogy."

Gandhi said: "Of course, you will not accept the analogy because you think this sex expression without desire for children is a need of the soul, a contention I do not endorse."

Mrs. Sanger said: "Sex expression is a spiritual need and I claim that the quality of this expression is more important than the result, for the quality of the relationship is there regardless of results. We all know that the great majority of children are born as an accident, without the parents having any desire for conception. Seldom are two people drawn together in sex act simply by their desire to have children. Do you think it possible for two people who are in love, who are happy together, to regulate their sex act only once in two years, so that relationship would only take place when they wanted a child? Do you think it possible?"

Gandhi said: "I had the honour of doing that very thing and I am not the only one."

Mrs. Sanger thought it was illogical to contend that sex union for the purpose of having children would be love and union for the satisfaction of sexual appetite was lust, for the same act was involved in both. Gandhi immediately capitulated and said that he was ready to describe all sexual union as partaking of the nature of lust. He tried to make the whole thing clear by citing instances from his own life: "I know from my own experience, that as long as I looked upon my wife carnally, we had no real understanding. Our love did not reach a high plane. There was affection between us always, but we came closer and closer, the more we, or rather I, became restrained. There never was any want of restraint on the part of my wife. Very often she would show restraint, but she rarely resisted me although

she showed disinclination very often. All the time I wanted carnal pleasure I could not serve her. The moment I bade good-bye to a life of carnal pleasure, our whole relationship became spiritual. Lust died and love reigned instead."

Gandhi's own personal witness made little impression on Mrs. Sanger. She dismissed it as that of an idealist. "Must the sexual union take place only three or four times in an entire lifetime?" Mrs. Sanger asked.

"Why should people not be taught," said Gandhi, "that it is immoral to have more than three or four children and that after they have had that number they should sleep separately? If people are taught this it would harden into custom. And if social reformers cannot impress this idea upon the people, why not a law? If husband and wife have four children, they would have had sufficient animal enjoyment. Their love may then be lifted to a higher plane. Their bodies have met. After they have had the children they wanted, their love transforms itself into a spiritual relationship, if these children die and if they want more, then they may meet again. Why must people be slaves of this passion when they are not of others? When you give them education in birth control, you tell them it is a duty. You say to them that if they do not do this thing they will interrupt their spiritual evolution. You do not even talk of regulation. After giving them education in birth control, you do not say to them, 'thus far and no further'. You ask people to drink temperately, as though it was possible to remain temperate. I know these temperate people."

And yet, as Mrs. Sanger was so dreadfully in earnest, Gandhi did mention a remedy. That method was the avoidance of sexual union during unsafe periods, confiding it to the "safe" period of about ten days during the month. That had at least an element of self-control which had to be exercised during the unsafe period.

There was not much common between the two and they parted to differ. The interview, however, proved strenuous for Gandhi and his health further deteriorated. On January 17, he was removed to Bombay to get all his teeth extracted. On the 21st, he proceeded to Ahmedabad and stayed at Gujarat Vidyapith in peaceful surroundings. For over two months he did not write for *Harijan*.

On February 20, Gandhi left for Wardha. On the way he halted at Bardoli, where the members of the American Negro delegation came to have a talk with him.

Gandhi asked Dr. Thurman, leader of the delegation, questions relating to the American Negroes, in order to aquaint himself with the subject.

"Is the prejudice against colour growing or dying out?" he asked. "It is difficult to say," observed Dr. Thurman, "because in one place things look much improved, whilst in the other the outlook is still dark. But the economic question is acute everywhere, and in many of the industrial centres in the Middle West the prejudice against the Negro shows itself in its ugliest form. Among the workers there is a great amount of tension, which is quite natural, when the white thinks that the Negro's very existence is a threat to his own."

"Is the union between the Negroes and the whites recognized by law?" was another question. "Twenty-five states have laws definitely against these unions, and I have had to sign a bond of 500 dollars to promise that I would not register any such union," said Mr. Carrol, a pastor in Salem. "But," said Dr. Thurman, "there has been a lot of intermixture of races as, for 300 years or more, the Negro woman had no control over her body."

It was now their turn to ask questions. "Did the South African Negro take any part in your movement?" Dr. Thurman asked. "No," said Gandhi, "I purposely did not invite them. It would have endangered their cause. They would not have understood the technique of our struggle, nor could they have seen the purpose or the utility of non-violence."

This led to the discussion of the state of Christianity among the South African Negroes, and Gandhi explained at great length why Islam scored against Christianity there. The talk seemed to appeal very much to Dr. Thurman, professor of comparative religion. "We are often told," observed Dr. Thurman, "that but for the Arabs there would have been no slavery. I do not believe it." "No," said Gandhi, "it is not true at all. For, the moment a slave accepts Islam, he obtains equality with his master, and there are several instances of this in history."

Now the talk centred on a discussion which had mainly drawn the distinguished members to Gandhi. "Is non-violence, from your point of view, a form of direct action?" inquired Dr. Thurman. "It is not one form, it is the only form," replied Gandhi. "I do not, of course, confine the words 'direct action' to their technical meaning. But without any direct active expression of it, non-violence, to my mind, is

meaningless. It is the greatest and the activest force in the world. One cannot be passively non-violent. In fact, 'non-violence' is a term I had to coin, in order to bring out the root meaning of ahimsa. In spite of the negative particle 'non', it is no negative force. Superficially we are surrounded in life by strife and bloodshed, like living upon life. But some great seer, who ages ago penetrated the centre of truth, said: it is not through strife and violence, but through non-violence that man can fulfil his destiny and his duty to his fellow creatures. It is a force which is more positive than electricity and more powerful than even ether. At the centre of non-violence is a force which is self-acting. Ahimsa means 'love' in the Pauline sense, and yet something more than the 'love' defined by St. Paul, although I know St. Paul's beautiful definition is good enough for all practical purposes. Ahimsa includes the whole creation, and not only human. Besides, love in the English language has other connotations too, and so I was compelled to use the negative word. But it does not, as I have told you, express a negative force, but a force superior to all the forces put together. One person who can express ahimsa in life exercises a force superior to all the forces of brutality."

Question: "And is it possible for any individual to achieve this?"

Gandhi: "Certainly. If there was any exclusiveness about it, I should reject it at once."

Question: "Any idea of possession is foreign to it?"

Gandhi: "Yes. It possesses nothing, therefore, it possesses everything."

Question: "Is it possible for a single human being to resist the persistent invasion of the quality successfully?"

Gandhi: "It is possible. Perhaps your question is more universal than you mean. Is it not possible, you mean to ask, for one single Indian, for instance, to resist the exploitation of 300 million Indians? Or, do you mean the onslaught of the whole world against a single individual personally?"

Dr. Thurman: "Yes, that is one half of the question. I wanted to know, if one man can hold the whole violence at bay?"

Gandhi: "If he cannot, you must take it that he is not a true representative of ahimsa. Supposing I cannot produce a single instance in life of a man who truly converted his adversary, I would then say that is because no one had yet been found to express ahimsa in its fulness."

Question: "Then it overrides all other forces?"

Gandhi: "Yes, it is the only true force in life."

"Forgive now the weakness of this question," said Dr. Thurman, "but may I ask how are we to train individuals or communities in this difficult art?"

Gandhi: "There is no royal road, except through living the creed in your life which must be a living sermon. Of course, the expression in one's own life presupposes great study, tremendous perseverance, and a thorough cleansing of one's self of all the impurities. If for mastering of the physical sciences you have to devote a whole lifetime, how many lifetimes may be needed for mastering the greatest spiritual force that mankind has known? But why worry even if it means several lifetimes? For, if this is the only permanent thing in life, if this is the only thing that counts, then whatever effort you bestow on mastering it, is well spent. Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything else shall be added unto you. The Kingdom of Heaven is ahimsa."

Mrs. Thurman had restrained herself until now. But she could not go away without asking the question with which she would be confronted any day. "How am I to act, supposing my own brother was lynched before my very eyes?"

"There is such a thing as self-immolation," he said. "Supposing I was a Negro, and my sister was ravished by a white or lynched by a whole community, what would be my duty?—I ask myself. And the answer comes to me: I must not wish ill to these, but neither must I co-operate with them. It may be that ordinarily I depend on the lynching community for my livelihood. I refuse to co-operate with them, refuse even to touch the food that comes from them, and I refuse to co-operate with even my brother Negroes who tolerate the wrong. That is the self-immolation I mean. I have often in my life resorted to the plan. Of course, a mechanical act of starvation will mean nothing. One's faith must remain undimmed whilst life ebbs out, minute by minute. But I am a very poor specimen of the practice of non-violence, and my answer may not convince you. But I am striving very hard, and even if I do not succeed fully in this life, my faith will not diminish."

"We want you to come to America," said the guests. Mrs. Thurman reinforced the request, "We want you not for White America, but for the Negroes; we have many a problem that cries for solution,

and we need you badly." "How I wish I could," said Gandhi, "but I would have nothing to give you, unless I had given an ocular demonstration here of all that I have been saying. I must make good the message here, before I bring it to you. I do not say that I am defeated, but I have still to perfect myself. You may be sure that the moment I feel that call within me, I shall not hesitate."

Dr. Thurman explained that the Negroes were ready to receive the message. "Much of the peculiar background of our own life in America is our own interpretation of the Christian religion. When one goes through the pages of the hundreds of Negro spirituals, striking things are brought to my mind which remind me of all that you have told us today."

"Well," exclaimed Gandhi, "if it comes true, it may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world."

On February 29, Gandhi resumed writing for *Harijan*. He came out with an article, "Nothing Without Grace", about the origin of the breakdown and the measures taken to cope with it:

"I am now able, by way of trial, to resume to a limited extent my talks with the readers of *Harijan*. I shall not carry on private correspondence with reference to the correspondents' personal problems or domestic difficulties, except those with which I have already concerned myself, and I shall not accept public engagements or attend or speak at the public gatherings. There are positive directions about sleep, recreation, exercise and food, with which the reader is not concerned and with which, therefore, I need not deal. I hope that the readers of *Harijan* and correspondents will co-operate with me and Mahadev Desai, who has in the first instance to attend to all correspondence, in the observance of these restrictions.

"It will interest the reader to know something about the origin of the breakdown and the measures taken to cope with it. So far as I have understood the medical friends, after a very careful and painstaking examination of my system, they have found no functional derangement. Their opinion is that the breakdown was most probably due to the deficiency of proteins and carbohydrates in the form of sugar and starches, coupled with overstrain for a prolonged period involving long hours and concentration on numerous taxing private problems in addition to the performance of daily public duty. So far as I can recollect, I had been complaining for the past twelve months

or more that if I did not curtail the volume of ever growing work, I was sure to break down. Therefore, when it came, it was nothing new to me.

"The day I collapsed, I had a warning on rising in the morning that there was some unusual pain about the neck, but I made light of it and never mentioned it to anybody. I continued to go through the daily programme. The final stroke was a most exhausting and serious conversation I had with a friend whilst I was having the daily evening stroll. The nerves had already been sufficiently taxed during the preceding fortnight with the consideration and solution of problems which, for me, were quite as big and as important as, say, the paramount question of swaraj.

"Even if no fuss had been made over the collapse, I would have taken nature's peremtory warning to heart, given myself moderate rest, and tided over the difficulty. But looking back upon the past, I feel that it was well that the fuss was made. The extraordinary precautions advised by the medical friends, and equally extraordinary care taken by the two gaolers, enforced on me the exacting rest which I would not have taken and which allowed ample time for introspection. Not only have I profited by it, but the introspection has revealed the vital defeats in my following out of the interpretation of the Gita as I have understood it. I have discovered that I have not approached with adequate detachment the innumerable problems that have presented themselves for solution. It is clear that I have taken many of them to heart and allowed them to rouse my emotional being, and thus affect my nerves. In other words, they have not, as they should have in a votary of the Gita, left my body or my mind untouched. I verily believe that one who literally follows the prescription of the Eternal Mother need never grow old in mind. Such a one's body will wither in due course like leaves of a healthy tree, leaving the mind as young and as fresh as ever. That seems to me to be the meaning of Bhishma delivering his marvellous discourse to Yudhishthira, though he was on his death-bed. Medical friends were never tired of warning me against being excited over or affected by the events happening around me. Extra precautions were taken, to keep from me news of a tragic character. Though, I think, I was not quite so bad a devotee of the Gita as their precautions lead me to suppose, there was undoubtedly substance behind them. For I discovered with what a wrench I accepted Jamnalalji's conditions and

demanded that I should remove from Maganwadi to Mahila Ashram. Any way I had lost credit with him for detached action. The fact of the collapse was for him eloquent enough testimony for discrediting my vaunted detachment. I must plead guilty to the condemnation.

"The worst, however, was to follow. I have been trying to follow brahmacharya consciously and deliberately since 1899. My definition of it is purity not merely of body, but of both speech and thought also. With the exception of what must be regarded as one lapse, I can recall no instance, during more than thirty-six years' constant and conscious effort, of mental disturbance, such as I experienced during this illness. I was disgusted with myself. The moment the feeling came, I acquainted my attendants and the medical friends with my condition. They could give me no help. I expected none. I broke loose after the experience from the rigid rest that was imposed upon me. The confession of the wretched experience brought relief to me. I felt as if a great load had been raised from over me. It enabled me to pull myself together before any harm could be done. But what of the Gita? Its teaching is clear and precise. A mind that is once hooked to the Star of Stars becomes incorruptible. How far I must be from Him. He alone knows. Thank God that my much vaunted mahatmaship has never fooled me. But this enforced rest has humbled me as never before. It has brought to the surface my limitations and imperfections. But I am not so much ashamed of them, as I should be of hiding them from the public. My faith in the message of the Gita is as bright as ever. Unwearied ceaseless effort is the price that must be paid for turning that faith into rich infallible experience. But the same Gita says without any equivocation that the experience is not to be had without divine grace. We should develop swelled heads, if Divinity had not made that ample reservation."

For a week, ending March 6, members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh and some constructive workers met at Savli, a little village in the district of Chanda, C. P. It had a large Harijan population devoted to khadi production. In the Hindi notices sent to the invitees among the things they were to bring were lantern, writing material, postcards, envelopes, postage stamps and soap. Those who would take no ghee other than cow's ghee were advised to bring their own supply. About 150 delegates attended the conference.

The Gandhi Seva Sangh had arisen out of the exigencies of the political situation in 1923, when Gandhi was undergoing a long term

of imprisonment, and when his own aims and ideals seemed to be in the melting-pot. The programme and policy of the sangh went on evolving with those of the Congress with the result that the object of the sangh came to be national service "according to the principles of Mahatma Gandhi", and was confined to carrying out the constructive programme of the Congress. In 1930, came the call of civil disobedience, and until the beginning of 1934, most of the trustees and members of the sangh were in jail. After the indefinite suspension of civil disobedience in 1934, the sangh policy and programme became more defined, its constitution altered to widen the scope of its membership, and the institution, in 1936, composed of about a hundred members, pledged to carry out in their private and public lives the principles of truth and non-violence.

The sangh met at Savli not in order to pass any resolutions but in order to enable its members, many of whom were workers in villages, to compare notes with one another, to enable them to get into closer touch and to plan the future work. They camped in huts; the floors were covered with paddy hay. The food cooked was of the simplest character and much of the work was done by the members themselves. The food bill came to about three annas per head, and the expenses, including the train fares, taxi hire, lighting, and other items, did not exceed Rs. 3,000 for two hundred members and the guests. There were not more than a dozen *charpais* and most of the people slept in the open, with simple village-made mats and blankets for their beds. A party of twelve to twenty went out street-cleaning every morning and also attended to the sanitation of the camp. At noon all met in the conference premises to do the sacrificial spinning for half an hour, and many plied their wheels or *taklis* throughout the deliberations. The morning prayers were held at five and the evening prayers at seven.

The sangh session which opened on February 29 was held under the shadow of the tragic death of Kamala Nehru. The sangh commenced work by requesting Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President, to hoist the Tricolour which, as soon as it was hoisted, was lowered half-mast.

During the session of the sangh, everyone seemed to subject himself to ruthless examination, and Mashruwala's presidential address and his closing remarks were characterized by self-abasement. He chastised some of those whom he regarded as shirkers, those who, in

his opinion, were fully qualified to be the members of the sangh, for deliberately remaining out of it. He averted to some of the seeming inconsistencies of their conduct and conceptions, and the disparity between their principles and practice. Same rigid self-examination characterized the proceedings of the meeting.

Two or three days out of the seven were devoted to questions and answers, two days to giving every member an opportunity to submit a report of his work and narrate his experiences, and a day and a half to giving brief details of the life story of every member in order to introduce him to the rest. Questions were invited and Mashruwala requested Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Vinoba Bhave and Kaka Kalelkar to deal with them.

A question that exercised the minds of a section of the Gandhi Seva members was the compatibility or otherwise of the constructive with the political programme. Did an exclusive emphasis on the one exclude the other? Was such an emphasis necessary? Were these two mutually exclusive?

"I see," remarked Gandhi, "that there is a tendency to believe that these programmes are mutually exclusive or antagonistic. Much of our misunderstanding arises out of this belief. The worker in the constructive field looks down upon the political programme and vice versa. But really there is no such opposition. I had thought that it was clear by now to every worker that there was no absolute division between the so-called political and the so-called constructive programmes. In our method of work there are no watertight compartments. Nevertheless, I do maintain that for the sake of efficiency it is necessary for one to confine oneself to one item at a time or such items that conveniently run together. The Governor of the Bank of England exercises considerable influence on the politics of England, but he never busies himself with what are called active politics. He has hardly the time to follow the debates in the House of Commons. But he is at least as important a member in the English public life as say, a noted member of the House of Commons. As a general rule I would suggest that the members of the sangh should occupy themselves with work that brings no kudos and that is ordinarily not liked by the workers."

There was a discussion amongst the members about the necessity for some kind of organized propaganda, in order to help the spread of Gandhi's teachings. "There is no such thing as 'Gandhism', and

I do not want to leave any sect after me," said Gandhi. "I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems. There is, therefore, no question of my leaving any code like the code of Manu. There can be no comparison between that great lawgiver and me. The opinions I have formed and the conclusions I have arrived at are not final, I may change them tomorrow. I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could do. In doing so, I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments in the practice of truth and non-violence. By instinct, I have been truthful, but not non-violent. As a Jain *muni* once rightly said, I was not so much a votary of ahimsa, as I was of truth, and I put the latter in the first place and the former in the second. For, as he put it, I was capable of sacrificing non-violence for the sake of truth. In fact, it was in the course of my pursuit of truth that I discovered non-violence. Our scriptures have declared that there is no *dharma* higher than truth. But non-violence, they say, is the highest duty. The word *dharma*, in my opinion, has different connotations as used in the two aphorisms.

"Well, all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. But, you will not call it 'Gandhism'; there is no 'ism' about it. And no elaborate literature or propaganda is needed about it. The scriptures have been quoted against my position, but I have held faster than ever to the position that truth may not be sacrificed for anything whatsoever. Those who believe in the simple truths I have laid down can propagate them only by living them. People have laughed at my spinning wheel, and an acute critic once observed that when I died the wheels would serve to make the funeral pyre. That, however, has not shaken my firm faith in the spinning wheel. How am I to convince the world by means of books that the whole of my constructive programme is rooted in non-violence? My life alone can demonstrate it.

"But you may say that books and newspapers are needed in order to help workers to answer critics. Well, I write as much as is needed in order to explain the things I stand for. And even if you fail to answer critics, why worry? Tell the poor villagers that you are there in their midst to serve them with your wheels, your brooms, and your

buckets; let them accept your service if they will, or reject it if they must, because you cannot answer your critics.

"Must we then, you will ask, work away in silence, without bothering about our critics? Yes. I should not mind your even taking a vow of silence. Write, if you feel that you cannot do without it. But let not your work suffer or the people's enthusiasm be damped because you fail to publish books.

"This, however, is the ideal. I can understand your desire for some authoritative publications, explaining the similar things that we are striving to do. These you may have without entering into a controversy. The proposed committee should function without any flourish of trumpets. Your publications should be in the shape of guide-books for the workers."

Along with the annual meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh, there were many important items of interest. There was a small exhibition where members of the sangh brought handicrafts from their own parts of the country. These included articles of daily use, like bamboo sieves, millstones, both for husking rice and grinding corn, lanterns with a clever device for burning seed-oil instead of kerosene oil, and so on. There was a sewing-machine, entirely hand-made and claiming to be an improvement in certain respects upon the foreign machines, which attracted a good deal of attention. In the centre sat a number of spinners from Savli village and its neighbourhood, spinning from eight to nine hours every day and competing for the prizes announced for those who passed the tests fixed by the Charkha Sangh for the higher wage.

Commenting on the sangh exhibition, Gandhi said: "From the point of view of those who have brought exhibits from various parts of the country, I can understand the place of these things here. But I must tell you that you should have concentrated on the things made here or in its neighbourhood. Whenever we propose to hold an exhibition in a particular place, we should explore the potentialities of that place and give prominence to the things the place is capable of producing. We must see that we don't turn an exhibition into a museum. Museums of ancient things which have disappeared from our economic life have their use and place, but not in our programme which concentrates on industries and crafts, which are capable of being revived. One thing that must be borne in mind by every one is that we must think in the terms of the interests of the people in whose

midst we are meeting. How much, we should ask ourselves, are we going to benefit the villagers by going and camping in their midst?"

After the sangh session, he turned his attention to the birth control propaganda that was being carried on by Mrs. Sanger and others. "It is the philanthropic motive," he wrote, "that no doubt impels many birth control reformers to a whirlwind campaign in favour of the use of contraceptives. I invite them to contemplate the ruinous consequences of their misplaced philanthropy."

In *Harijan* dated March 14, Gandhi wrote: "A co-worker who is a careful reader of my writings was disturbed to read that I was likely to approve of the safe-period method of birth control. I endeavoured to make it clear to the friend that the safe-period method did not repel me as did the use of the contraceptives, and that it was open largely only to married couples. But the discussion of the topic led us into much deeper waters than either of us had expected. The fact that my friend was repelled by the safe-period method, as much as by that of contraceptives, showed to me that he believed in the possibility of ordinary persons practising the restraint imposed by the Smritis, that is, that the union between the husband and wife was permitted only when the parties really desired to have children. Whilst I knew the rule, I had never regarded it in the light that I began to do, at the discussion. All these long years, I had regarded it as a counsel of perfection not to be carried out literally and that so long as the married couples carried on intercourse by mutual consent but without special regard to the desire for progeny, they were carrying out the purpose of marriage without breaking any positive injunction of the Smritis. But the new light, in which I viewed the Smriti text, was a revelation to me. I understood now, as I never had done before, the statement that married people who strictly observed the injunction of the Smritis were as much brahmacharis as those who were never married and lived chaste lives.

"The sole object of sexual intercourse according to the new light was the desire for progeny, never gratification of the sexual instinct. Simple gratification of the instinct would be counted, according to this view of marriage, as lust. This may appear to be a harsh expression to use for our enjoyment, which has hitherto been regarded as innocent and legitimate. But I am not dealing with custom. I am dealing with the science of marriage as propounded by Hindu sages. Their presentation may be faulty, it may be altogether wrong. But

for one like me, who believes in several Smriti texts as inspired and based on experience, there is no escape from a full acceptance of their meaning. I know no other way of finding the truth of things and testing certain old texts, in accordance with their full meaning, no matter how hard the test may appear, and how harsh its deductions may sound.

"In the light of what I have said above, birth control by contraceptives and the like is a profound error. I write thus with a full sense of my responsibility. I have great regard for Mrs. Margaret Sanger and her followers. She impressed me much by her great zeal for her cause. I know that she has great sympathy for the women who suffer because they have to bear the burden of carrying and rearing unwanted children. I know also that this method of birth control has the support of many Protestant divines, scientists, learned men, and doctors, many of whom I have the honour of knowing personally and for whom I entertain high regard. But I should be false to my God who is Truth and nothing but Truth, if I concealed my belief from the reader or these great advocates of the method. Indeed, if I hid my belief, I should never discover my error, if my present belief is one. Moreover, its declaration is due to those many men and women who accept my guidance and advice in many moral problems including this one concerning birth control.

"That birth requires to be regulated and controlled is a common cause between the advocates of contraceptives and the like. The difficulty of control through self-restraint is not to be denied. Yet there is no other way of attaining innermost conviction that if the method under discussion gains universal acceptance, the mankind will suffer moral deterioration. This I say, in spite of the evidence to the contrary, that is often produced by the advocates of the method.

"I believe I have no superstition in me. Truth is not truth merely because it is ancient. Nor is it necessarily to be regarded with suspicion, because it is ancient. There are some fundamentals of life which may not be lightly given up because they are difficult of enforcement in one's life.

"Birth control through self-control is, no doubt, difficult. But no one has yet been known seriously to dispute its efficacy and even its superiority over the use of contraceptives.

"Then, I feel that the full acceptance of the implication of the injunction of the shastras, as to the strictly confined use of the sexual

act, makes the observance of self-control much easier than if one regards the act itself as a source of supreme enjoyment. The function of the organs of generation is merely to generate progeny obviously of the highest type possible for a married couple. This can and should only take place, when both parties desire not sexual union but progeny, which is the result of such union. Desire for such union, therefore, without the desire for progeny, must be considered unlawful and should be restrained."

The possibility of such a control for an ordinary man, he examined in the next issue of *Harijan*:

"There is nothing in our society today which would conduce to self-control. Our very upbringing is against it. The primary concern of parents is to marry their children anyhow, so that they may breed like rabbits. If they are girls, they are married at as early an age as they conveniently can be, irrespective of their moral welfare. The marriage ceremony is one long-drawn-out agony of feasting and frivolity. The householder's life is in keeping with the past life. It is a prolongation of self-indulgence. Holidays and social enjoyments are so arranged, as to allow one the greatest latitude for sensuous living. The literature, that is almost thrust on one generally, panders to the animal passion. The most modern literature almost teaches that indulgence in it is a duty, and total abstinence a sin.

"Is it any wonder, if the control of the sexual appetite has become difficult, if not almost impossible? If then birth control through self-restraint is the most desirable and sensible, and totally harmless method, we must change the social ideal and environment. The only way to bring about the desired end is for individuals who believe in the method of self-control to make the beginning themselves and with unquenchable faith to affect their surroundings. For them, the conception of marriage, I discussed last week, has, it seems to me, the greatest significance. A proper grasp of it means a complete mental revolution. It is not meant merely for a few select individuals. It is presented as the law of the human species. Its breach reduces the status of human beings and brings swift punishment in the shape of multiplicity of unwanted children, a train of ever increasing diseases, and disruption of man as a moral being responsible to his Maker. Birth control by the contraceptives, no doubt, regulates to a certain extent, the number of new comers, and enables persons of moderate means, to keep the wolf from the door. But the moral harm it does to

the individual and society is incalculable. For one thing, the outlook upon life for those who satisfy the sexual appetite for the sake of it is wholly changed. Marriage ceases to be a sacrament for them. It means a revaluation of the social ideals hitherto prized as a precious treasure. No doubt this argument will make little appeal to those who regard the old ideals about marriage as a superstition. My argument is only addressed to those, who regard marriage as a sacrament, and woman not as an instrument of animal pleasure, but as mother of man and trustee of the virtue of her progeny.

"My experience of self-control by my fellow workers and myself confirms me in the view presented here. It assumes overwhelming force from the discovery in a vivid light of the ancient conception of marriage. For me, brahmacharya in married life now assumes its natural and inevitable position and becomes as simple as the fact of marriage itself. Any other method of birth control seems useless and unthinkable. Once the idea that the only and grand function of the sexual organ is generation, possesses man and woman, union for any other purpose they will hold as criminal waste of the vital fluid and consequent excitement caused to man and woman, as an equally criminal waste of precious energy. It is now easy to understand why the scientists of old have put such great value upon the vital fluid and why they have insisted upon its strong transmutation into the highest form of energy for the benefit of society. They boldly declare that one who has acquired a perfect control over his or her sexual energy strengthens the whole being, physical, mental and spiritual, and attains powers unattainable by the other means.

"Let not the reader be disturbed by the absence of many or even any living specimen of such giant brahmacharis. The brahmacharis, we see about us today, are very incomplete specimens. At best, they are aspirants, who have acquired control over their bodies but not their minds. They have not become proof against temptation. This is not because brahmacharya is so difficult of attainment. Social environment is against them, and the majority of those who are making an honest effort unknowingly isolate the control of the animal passion from all other passions, whereas the effort to be successful must include control over all the passions to which man is prey. Whilst brahmacharya is not impossible of attainment by the average man and woman, it must not be supposed that it requires less effort than that required by an average student who has set his heart upon be-

coming a master of any one of the sciences. Attainment of brahmacharya in the sense here meant means mastery of the science of life."

In giving counsel for the young, Gandhi wrote on March 28:

"I want to revert to the subject of birth control by contraceptives. It is dinned into one's ears that the gratification of the sex urge is a solemn obligation like the obligation of discharging debts lawfully incurred, and that not to do so would involve the penalty of intellectual decay. This sex urge has been isolated from the desire for progeny, and it is said by the protagonists of the use of contraceptives that the conception is an accident to be prevented except when the parties desire to have children. I venture to suggest that this is a most dangerous doctrine to preach anywhere; much more so in a country like India, where the middle-class male population has become imbecile through abuse of the creative function. If satisfaction of the sex urge is a duty, the unnatural vice and several other ways of gratification would be commendable. The reader should know that even persons of note have been known to approve of what is commonly known as sexual perversion. He may be shocked at the statement. But, if it somehow or other gains the stamp of respectability, it will be the rage amongst boys and girls to satisfy their urge among the members of their own sex. For me, the use of contraceptives is not far removed from the means to which persons have hitherto resorted for the gratification of their sexual desire with the results that very few know. I know what havoc secret vice has played among schoolboys and schoolgirls. The introduction of contraceptives under the name of science and the imprimatur of known leaders of society has intensified the complication and made the task of the reformers who work for purity of social life wellnigh impossible for the moment. I betray no confidence when I inform the reader, that there are unmarried girls of impressionable age, studying in schools and colleges, who study birth control literature and magazines with avidity, and even possess contraceptives. It is impossible to confine their use to married women. Marriage loses its sanctity when its purpose and highest use is conceived to be the satisfaction of the animal passion without contemplating the natural result of such satisfaction.

"I have no doubt that those learned men and women who are carrying on propaganda with missionary zeal in favour of the use of contraceptives are doing irreparable harm to the youth of the country under the false belief that they will be saving thereby the poor women

who may be obliged to bear children against their will. Those who need to limit their children will not be easily reached by them. Our poor women have not the knowledge or the training that the women of the West have. Surely, the propaganda is not being carried on on behalf of the middle-class women, for they do not need the knowledge at any rate, so much as the poor classes do.

"The greatest harm, however, done by that propaganda, lies in its rejection of the old ideal and substitution in its place of one which, if carried out, must spell the moral and physical extinction of the race. The horror with which ancient literature has regarded the fruitless use of the vital fluid was not a superstition born of ignorance. What shall we say of a husbandman who will sow the finest seed in his possession on the stony ground or the owner of a field who will receive in his field, rich with fine soil, good seed under conditions that will make it impossible for it to grow? God has blessed man with seed that has the highest potency, and woman with a field richer than the richest earth to be found anywhere on this globe. Surely, it is criminal folly for man to allow his most precious possession to run to waste. He must guard it with a care greater than he will bestow upon the richest pearls in his possession. And so is a woman guilty of criminal folly, who will receive the seed in her life-producing field with the deliberate intention of letting it run to waste. Both he and she will be judged guilty of misuse of the talents given to them and will be dispossessed of what they have been given. Sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is means only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity. Contraceptives of a kind there were before and there will be hereafter, but the use of them was formerly regarded as sinful. It was reserved for our generation to glorify vice by calling it virtue. The greatest disservice protagonists of contraceptives are rendering to the youth of India is to fill their minds with what appears to me to be wrong ideology. Let young men and women of India who hold her destiny in their hands beware of this false god and guard the treasure with which God has blessed them and use it, if they wish, for the only purpose for which it is intended."

With special reference to India's women, he wrote: "The first thing is to free woman from mental slavery, to teach her the sacredness of her body, and to teach her the dignity of national service and the service of humanity. It is not fair to assume that India's women

are beyond redemption and that they have, therefore, to be simply taught the use of contraceptives for the sake of preventing births and preserving such health as they may be in possession of. Let not the sisters who are rightly indignant over the miseries of women, who are called upon to bear children, whether they will or no, be impatient. Not even the propaganda in favour of contraceptives is going to promote the desired end overnight. Every method is a matter of education. My plea is for the right type."

Gandhi's article addressed to the youth evoked some pathetic questions. A correspondent wrote: "What has been possible for you is not possible for all young men. I can restrain myself. But my wife cannot. She does not want children but she does want to enjoy herself. Is it not my duty to satisfy her? I read from the papers that you are not averse to promoting marriages and blessing them. Surely you know or ought to know that they are not contracted with the high purpose that you have mentioned."

"The correspondent is right," said Gandhi. "The fact that I bless so many marriages, when they satisfy the tests that I have set as to age, economy, etc., shows that I know the youth of the country to an extent that would justify my guiding them when they seek my guidance."

"My correspondent's case is typical," Gandhi added. "He deserves sympathy. That the sole purpose of sexual connection is procreation is in the nature of a new discovery for me. Although, I had known the rule, I had never before given it the weight it deserved. I must have till recently regarded it as a mere pious wish. I now regard it as a fundamental law of married state which is easy of observance if its paramount importance is duly recognized. My object will be fulfilled when the law is given its place in society. To me it is a living law. We break it always and pay heavily for its breach. If my correspondent realizes its inestimable value, and if he has love for her and has faith in himself, he will convert his wife to his view. If he is sincerely desirous that his wife should be weaned from the sexual desire, let him surround her with the purest love, let him explain the law to her, let him explain the physical effects of union without the desire for procreation, let him tell her what the vital fluid means. Let him further engage his wife in healthy pursuits, and strive to regulate her diet, exercise, etc., so as to still the passion in her. Above all, if he is a man of religion, he will try to transmit to his companion

his own living faith. For, I must confess that the observance of the law of continence is impossible without a living faith in God, which is living Truth."

He began to receive numerous letters on the sex problem and he gave a forum in *Harijan* for its scientific discussion. A correspondent invited him to discuss the question of imparting sex knowledge to young people. "Sexual science," he said, "is of two kinds, that which is used for controlling or overcoming the sexual passion, and that which is used to stimulate and feed it. Instruction in the former is as necessary a part of a child's education, as the latter is harmful and dangerous and fit, therefore, only to be shunned."

With regard to imparting to young pupils knowledge about the use and function of generative organ, Gandhi observed:

"It seems to me, that it is necessary to impart such knowledge to a certain extent. At present they are left to pick up such knowledge anyhow, with the result that they are misled into abusive practices. We cannot properly control or conquer the sexual passion by turning a blind eye to it. I am, therefore, strongly in favour of teaching young boys and young girls the significance and right use of their generative organs. In my own way I have tried to impart this knowledge to young children of both sexes, for whose training I was responsible. But the sex education that I stand for must have for its object the conquest and sublimation of the sex passion. Such education should automatically serve to bring home to children the essential distinction between man and brute, to make them realize that it is man's special privilege and pride to be gifted with the faculties of head and heart both, that he is a thinking no less than a feeling animal, and to renounce the sovereignty of reason over the blind instincts is, therefore, to renounce a man's estate. In man, reason quickens and guides the feeling, in brute, the soul lies ever dormant. To awaken the heart is to awaken the dormant soul, to awaken reason and to inculcate discrimination between good and evil. Today, our entire environment—our reading, our thinking, and our social behaviour—is generally calculated to subserve and cater for sex urge. To break through its coils is no easy task. But it is a task worthy of our highest endeavour."

"Sex complex," he observed, "is today steadily gaining ground in India. And what is more, those who fall under its sway feel as if there is something meritorious about it. When a slave begins to take pride

in his fetters and hugs them like precious ornaments, the triumph of the slave-owner is complete. But this success of cupid, spectacular though it may be, will, I am convinced, prove to be shortlived and ignoble, and at long last, end in inanition even like a scorpion whose venom is spent. But that does not mean that we can in the meantime afford to sit with folded hands. The certainty of its defeat need not, must not, lull us into a false sense of security. The conquest of lust is the highest endeavour of a man's or woman's existence. Without overcoming lust, man cannot hope to rule over self; without rule over self, there can be no swaraj or Ram Raj. Rule of all without the rule of oneself would prove to be as deceptive and as disappointing, as a painted toy mango, charming to look at, but hollow and empty within. No worker, who has not overcome lust, can hope to render any genuine service to the cause of Harijans, communal unity, khadi, cow protection or village reconstruction. Great causes like these cannot be served by intellectual equipment alone, they call for spiritual effort or soul force. Soul force comes only through God's grace and never descends upon a man, who is a slave to lust."

Segaon

1936

In March 1936, Jawaharlal Nehru flew back to India from Europe, President-elect of the Congress. His address at the annual session of the Congress held in Lucknow in April was memorable for its proclamation of socialist aims, for its focusing of the Indian struggle in the context of the gathering world struggle against fascism and reaction, and for its demand for a broad front of all the anti-imperialist forces, uniting the workers and the peasants with the middle-class elements dominantly represented in the Congress. He unsparingly criticized the weakness of the existing position and declared: "We have largely lost touch with the masses. Congress membership stood at below half a million, registering 457,000."

He was a socialist, Nehru said in effect, because only by socialism, involving "vast and revolutionary changes, could India's problems and the world's be solved." But he did not suggest that socialism could be established in India forthwith. The first objective was independence, for which all Congressmen, whatever their opinions on social and economic issues, must stand united. And the only way of attaining it was the Congress way. "Independence cannot be given." It could not be achieved through the Government of India Act, a "new charter of slavery", designed to perpetuate the hold of the British imperialism in India. It must come by means of a democratic constituent assembly. The opportunity for such an assembly would arise and that "sooner perhaps than we expect". "Let us get ready," he said. "Every war, waged by the imperialist powers will be an imperialist war whatever the excuses put forward; therefore, we must keep out of it."

Nehru advised that when the provincial part of the India Act came into force, the Congress should certainly contest the elections to the legislatures, but on no account must Congressmen take office. "To accept office and ministry," he stated, "under the conditions of the

act is to negative our rejection of it. It is always dangerous to assume responsibility without power. It will be far worse with this constitution, hedged in with the safeguards and reserved powers and mortgaged funds."

Concluding the address, Nehru referred to Gandhi: "During this period of difficulty and storm and stress, inevitably our minds and hearts turn to our great leader, who has guided us and inspired us by his dynamic personality, these many years. Physical ill health prevents him now from taking his full share in public activities. Our good wishes go out to him for his rapid and complete recovery, and with those good wishes is the selfish desire to have him back again amongst us. We have differed from him in the past and we shall differ from him in the future, about many things, and it is right that each one of us should act up to his convictions. But the bonds that hold us together are stronger and more vital than our differences, and the pledges we took together still ring in our ears. How many of us have that passionate desire for Indian independence and the raising of our poverty-stricken masses, which consumes him? Many things he has taught us long years ago—it seems now—fearlessness and discipline and the will to sacrifice ourselves for the larger cause. That lesson may have grown dim, but we have not forgotten it, nor can we ever forget him, who has made us what we are and raised India again from the depths. The pledge of independence that we took together still remains to be redeemed, and we await again him to guide us with his wise counsel. But no leader, however great he be, can shoulder the burden single-handed; we must all share it to the best of our ability and not seek helplessly to rely on others to perform miracles."

On the eve of the Congress the Working Committee adopted most of the resolutions sponsored by Jawaharlal Nehru but in the Subjects Committee, some of the president's recommendations were rejected. His proposal for collective affiliation of the workers' and peasants' organizations was not adopted, giving place to the formation of a mass contact committee for further consideration of the question. On the main issue, namely, the new Government of India Act, the Congress, while condemning the act, resolved to contest the elections on the basis of a manifesto to be prepared; and on the question of acceptance of office, the Congress left it to be decided at the proper time by the A.-I.C.C. Resolutions on civil liberties, war danger, and

sympathy for Abyssinia were passed. The resolution on the Indian states drew prominent attention to the fact that "the people of the states should have the same right of self-determination as those of the rest of India and that the Congress stands for the same political, civil and democratic liberties for every part of India. The Congress, however, desires to point out that the struggle for liberty within the states has, in the very nature of things, to be carried on by the people of the states themselves."

The important resolution on the agrarian programme passed by the Congress Working Committee declared: "This Congress calls upon each of the provincial Congress committees to make recommendations in detail to the Working Committee by August 31, 1936, for being considered and placed before the All-India Congress Committee, having particular regard to the following matters: (1) Freedom of organization of the agricultural labourers and peasants; (2) Safeguarding of the interests of the peasants, where there are intermediaries between the state and themselves; (3) Just and fair relief of agricultural indebtedness, including the arrears of rent and revenue; (4) Emancipation of the peasants from feudal and semi-feudal levies; (5) Substantial reduction in respect of rent and the revenue demands; (6) A just allotment of the state expenditure for the social, economic and cultural amenities of the villages; (7) Protection against harassing restrictions on the utilization of the local natural facilities for their domestic and agricultural needs; (8) Freedom from oppression and harassment at the hands of Government officials and landlords; (9) Fostering industries for relieving rural unemployment."

The outcome of the Congress proceedings proved that a majority gave full support to the old leadership. The formation of the Working Committee distressed Nehru still more. In theory the committee had to be nominated by the Congress President, but he could not override the majority view of the Congress. He had offered his resignation at the very outset, but he was persuaded to remain and continue. He selected among others for the Congress Working Committee Subhas Bose, Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan.

Gandhi was present during the Congress session, but he did not participate in it. But, he made an exception with regard to the exhibition arranged by the All-India Spinners' Association and the



Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

Gandhi getting ready for the cleaning campaign, Wardha, 1936



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi during the high blood pressure attack, Wardha, January 1936





From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi's interview with Mrs. Margaret Sanger, Wardha, January 1936

Studying the notes of his discussion, Wardha, January 1936



Photograph : Cousins Bros.

A tonga ride between Segaon and Wardha, 1936

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi at discussion, 1936



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi repairing his charkha, Wardha, 1936

Dear Gurudev,

God has blessed my poor effort. And here is the money. Now you will relieve the public mind by announcing cancellation of the rest of the programme.

May God keep you for many a year to come.

Yours with love,

M.K.Gandhi

Delhi

27/3/36

Courtesy: Visva-Bharati

Gandhi's letter to Tagore, dated Delhi, March 27, 1936

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi declaring open Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition, Lucknow Congress, March 28, 1936

All-India Village Industries Association. Opening the exhibition on March 28, Gandhi said:

"This exhibition, to my mind, brings out concretely for the first time the conception of a true rural exhibition I have nursed in my breast for several years. In 1921, when we met in Ahmedabad in the first year of the new Congress constitution, we took the first step towards rural-mindedness, and the exhibition organized under the auspices of the Congress held there was the beginning of the process which you find reaching its maturity today after fifteen years. I have believed and repeated times without number that India is to be found not in its few cities but in its 700,000 villages. But we who have gathered here are not villagers, we are town dwellers. We the town dwellers have believed that India is to be found in its towns and that the villages were created to minister to our needs. We have hardly ever paused to inquire, if those poor folks get sufficient to eat and clothe themselves with, and whether they have a roof to shelter themselves from sun and rain. Now I do not think that any Congress worker has travelled through the length and breadth of India, as much as I have done, during the past twenty years. That in itself is hardly a thing to be proud of. I, however, humbly claim, as a result of those peregrinations, to know the Indian villages more than any other Congress worker or leader. I have found that the town dweller has generally exploited the villager; in fact, he has lived on poor villager's substance. Many British officials have written about the conditions of the people of India. No one has, to my knowledge, said that the Indian villager has enough to keep body and soul together. On the contrary, they have admitted that the bulk of the population live on the verge of starvation and ten per cent are semi-starved, and that millions have to rest content with a pinch of dirty salt and chillies and polished rice or parched grain. You may be sure that, if any of us were to be asked to live on that diet, we should not expect to survive it longer than a month, or should be afraid of losing our mental faculties. And yet our villagers go through that state from day to day. The Village Industries Association was formed last year in order to study the conditions in which they live and the state of their handicrafts, and to revive such village arts and crafts as may be revived. Simultaneously with the creation of the A.-I.V.I.A. was passed a resolution to the effect that the future exhibitions should be organized by the Spinners' and the Village Industries Associations.

This exhibition which I am about to declare open today is the first of that kind.

"The whole conception here is mine, and yet I must confess that we are still far from bringing out that conception fully. It is an evidence of the organizers' wonderful industry, and yet it is not perfect of its kind. It was not humanly possible to achieve it during the time at their disposal. It is no easy job to bring village artisans from their villages. You will find here villagers from South India who perhaps do not know where they have come to. It is the purpose of this exhibition to show that even this starving India of the villages is capable of producing things which we town dwellers may use both to the villagers' and our advantage.

"This exhibition is not a spectacular show like its predecessors. Those earlier ones were bound to be big shows. They were designed for a different purpose. Congress expenses were generally found out of the takings of the exhibition. The whole outlook was changed last year. We decided not to have things of spectacular interest, but we decided to give the spectators a glimpse of the Indian villager and his craft. This, therefore, is a vast educative effort. Not that we will have no takings this time. Only they will depend on those Congressmen who are intent on freedom and will win it by rehabilitating the village. If they will establish a living bond between the towns and the villages, they will flock to the exhibition and will make a point of studying the various demonstrations in the exhibition.

"This cannot be done by one visit only. You should visit it daily and carefully study every section. If you will do this, you will marvel at the energy and industry expended in organizing it. You will be deeply interested in it, if you approach it in a spirit of service. You will find here craftsmen and craftswomen from Kashmir and South India, from Sind and Assam, and learn how they earn their scanty living. You will find that it is within your power to add a little to their income and to enable them to have a square meal, if only you will make up your minds to pay for their wares enough, to ensure them a living wage.

"You will not expect me to describe all or even one of the numerous sections of the exhibition. It is impossible for me to do so. Let me tell you that you will have an inkling of the inside even from where you are sitting. For in front of you are no triumphal arches but there are simply but exquisitely decorated walls done by Nandalal Bose,

the eminent artist from Santiniketan and his co-workers, who have tried to represent all the villagers' crafts in simple artistic symbols. And when you go inside the art gallery, on which Babu Nandalal Bose has lavished his labours for several weeks, you will feel, as I did, like spending there hours together. But even the other sections will attract you. You may not find in the exhibition anything to amuse you like music or cinema shows, but I can assure you, you will find much to learn.

"I want you all to be voluntary advertising agents of the exhibition so that numbers may be attracted to see it. The exhibition has not been for the villagers, it is organized for the city dweller, to enable him to see how the villager lives and what he is capable of. The reception committee has spent something like Rs. 35,000 in order to bring this exhibition into being. The least that you must do is to enable them to meet the expenses. This you can do, if you become their enthusiastic advertising agents. Commission I can promise you none, though I dare say you will get it for work dutifully done when you appear before the Great White Throne. I may tell you that I am staying here for some days and expect to visit the exhibition as often as I can. I shall, therefore, know how you have discharged your trust."

Speaking second time on April 12, Gandhi made an appeal to the people to go and visit the exhibition once, twice, three times, even four times, with their eyes and ears open:

"When I told you the other day that this exhibition was not a cinema show, I meant more than I said. When you go to a cinema show you meet with things there to captivate in a sensual way your eyes and ears. I may tell you that we have tried to boycott from this exhibition everything that had no educative value. We have tried to make the exhibition a sacred and a holy place, a feast for your eyes and your ears, a spiritual feast capable of purifying the senses. I shall tell you why. Do you know Orissa and its skeletons? Well, from that hunger-stricken impoverished land of skeletons have come men who have wrought miracles in bone and horn and silver. Go and see how the soul of man, even in an impoverished body, can breathe life into lifeless horns and metal. A poor potter has also worked miracles out of clay. Things which I thought would be worth several annas are worth only a copper or a couple of coppers, and yet they are delicate little pieces of art. A dear sister purchased the other day a

little Krishna in ivory. She was not given to worshipping Krishna, but she now tells me that she has begun to worship the exquisite little form.

"The exhibition is thus not a spectacular show, but a kind of fairyland. But our tastes have been so debased that the miracles happening before our very eyes appear like so much dust or clay and trifles coming from abroad become exquisite pieces of art, water from a spring in far off Europe with the witchery of an unintelligible name becomes invested with a miraculous quality, while the water of the holy Ganges which is said to be a purifier and a natural disinfectant seems to be no better than water from a dirty pool."

Towards the close of the speech, Gandhi said: "If a vision of the kind I have described to you fails to stir your hearts and urge you to make some little sacrifice for the ill-fed and the underfed, God help you. Iqbal whose poem 'Hindostan Hamara' still stirs our hearts with emotion must have had some such vision before his mind's eye when he described India with her eternal sentry the Himalayas, and the Ganges the eternal witness of the numerous stages through which our civilization has passed. We attend the flag-hoisting ceremonies and are proud of our national flag. Let me tell you that our pride has no meaning, if you do not like things made in India and hanker after the foreign ones. It is idle for those whose heart is not stirred at the sight of things made by our poor craftsmen and craftswomen and to make a little sacrifice for them to talk of independence for India."

During his fortnight's stay in Lucknow, Gandhi was full of the exhibition. Addressing the foreign visitors, he said: "I should like to spend weeks there and fill my soul with the atmosphere of the past. You find there workmen actually at work—workmen from Orissa and Kashmir working with their crudest possible tools, if you please, and yet conjuring up with their help some of the most gorgeous articles in silver and wool. The things you have brought for me are no patch on similar things you will find in the exhibition. Look at the men from Patna working at their sari of exquisite pattern and design. The work is now confined to only four families, whereas hundreds of families used to get their living in the past out of the work. They are so conservative that they would not let their nearest neighbour know the cunning of their craft. But we have drawn some of them out into light. Some of this work can be revived, in all its glory, if we are

prepared to pay for it adequately, pay enough to feed them and to keep them in health and comfort."

On his way to Wardha, Gandhi halted at Nagpur to preside over the All-India Literary Conference. He said he was out of place in a conference of litterateurs, especially as he knew better than anyone else that his knowledge of Hindi literature, and even of Gujarati literature, was nothing to speak of, and that his knowledge even of Gujarati grammar was indifferent. But he had been told that it was an impossible task to get together formidable litterateurs, who were like lions safe enough in their cages, but difficult to keep together and to be made to work together. It had been thought that he as a neutral man and a 'mahatma' might be of some service in bringing them together. There he was available to them for what he might be worth, but he wanted to make it absolutely clear that he was there simply to initiate the work of bringing the literary men of every province, speaking the different languages, and of serving the masses of India, by making available to them the best in all the rich languages of our country.

Then came the announcement of his intense longing to go and settle in a village: "I am here for a brief while for the limited purpose I have told you, but you may know that my heart is neither here nor even in Wardha. My heart is in the villages. For days, I have been striving with the Sardar to let me go to a village near Wardha. He is still unconvinced, but my mind won't rest, and God willing, I hope to go and settle in a village near Wardha in a short while. But that does not mean that I will not do the work I am doing now, or that I shall cease to be available for consultation to friends, or for advice to those who will seek it. Only my address will be a village where I would be living ordinarily. I have been asking all the co-workers who are doing village work, to go and settle in villages and to serve the villagers. I feel that I cannot do so effectively, until I go and settle in a village myself."

The conference was intended to develop the cultural contacts between the different provinces of India. Gandhi deplored the present state of things where people were, so to say, in a hide-bound way content to remain in their own linguistic and cultural walls, not even ready to acquaint themselves with the language and the literature of their neighbouring provinces. A handful of our literary men may be studying the different provincial literatures and exchanging the

treasure of other provincial languages. We had to seek to do much more. "We must", Gandhi added, "not only seek to know the picturesque language of the village folk but also to spread a knowledge of modern useful literature among the villagers. It is a shame that Chaitanya's lyrics are a sealed book to people outside Bengal and Orissa. Few of us here may know the name of Tiruvalluvar. People in the north are innocent even of the great saint's name. Few saints have given us treasures of knowledge contained in pithy epigrams as he has done."

But for that purpose not only the existing literary treasures had to be made available in a language which could be easily learnt by the masses in all the provinces, but even new literature has to be created—new literature of a healthy and health-giving type. "To-day," he said, "a plethora of highly objectionable erotic literature seems to be in evidence in every province. Indeed, there are some who say that barring the erotic, there is no other *rasa* worth the name; and because the erotic is at a premium, those who insist on restraint in literature are held up to ridicule as devoid of all *rasa*. They forget that even those who are said to sacrifice everything do not sacrifice *rasa* or the sacred passion. Dadabhai Naoroji sacrificed everything for the country, but he was fired by the sacred passion of patriotism. That gave him all his inner happiness. To say that Chaitanya was devoid of *rasa* is to confess the innocence of all *rasa*. Narasinha Mehta, the poet-saint of Gujarat, has described himself as a *bhogi*, but his *bhoga* was that of single-minded devotion to God. If you will not be annoyed, I would go to the length of saying that the erotic is the lowest of all *rasas*, and when it partakes of the obscene, it is wholly to be eschewed. If I had the power, I should taboo all literature calculated to promote communalism, fanaticism, and ill will and hatred between individuals, classes or races."

Soon after his arrival in Wardha, Gandhi visited Segaon, and addressing the eager villagers he told them of his tentative decision of staying amongst them: "Ever since my childhood, it has been a principle with me that I should not think of inflicting myself upon those who view my going in their midst with mistrust, misgivings or apprehension. I should not think of coming here, except to serve you. But in many places, my presence and the programme I stand for are viewed with considerable dread. At the back of this dread, is the fact that I have made the removal of untouchability a life's

mission. And you must have known from Mirabehn that I have cast out all untouchability from myself, that I hold all classes of people—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, Rajput, *mahar*, *chamar*, all alike, and I regard these distinctions based on birth as immoral. We have suffered because of these distinctions, and this sense of high and low has vitiated our lives. But I may tell you that I should not think of imposing these convictions on you. I should try to do so by persuasion, above all, by my own example. I shall try to serve you by cleaning your roads and your surroundings, by trying to render such help as I can if there is illness in the village, by teaching you self-help by way of helping you to revive your handicrafts. If you will co-operate with me, I shall be happy, if you will not, I shall be content to be absorbed among you as one among the few hundred that live here.

"I hope I shall come to settle here. But it depends on His will. For I did not know that He would move me from India to South Africa, and from South Africa I should come to Sabarmati, from Sabarmati to Maganwadi, and now from Maganwadi to Segaon."

Gandhi's idea of settling down in Segaon village did not appeal to some of his colleagues. There was no post office and no telegraph office. If he must settle in a village, why not settle in some village in Gujarat? He could not do so, inasmuch as he would not be able to look after his work in Maganwadi from Gujarat. Work was already going on in Gujarat, and he would not think of going and disturbing the work that was being done there. The workers' initiative might suffer and they might begin looking to him for suggestions at every step.

Why should he not have old co-workers with him? He wanted to do himself what he had been asking others to do; he wanted to face the difficulties as he was advising others to face. He would try to get all the help he needed from the village itself. He had hitherto largely drawn upon the middle-class people for co-workers. Why not try to get them from the masses themselves, so that they might get an opportunity of being trained as workers in their own villages?

It was said that it was too late in the day for Gandhi to try this new experiment, that it might be physically impossible for him—the squalor and dust and the hard life in the rainy season—and that his health might suffer a permanent breakdown. Gandhi said that he was humble enough to confess himself beaten and to come away, if

he found that he was physically unable to do the very work he had gone there for. But he refused to anticipate breakdowns.

In the early morning of April 30, Gandhi walked to Segaon, about five miles from Maganwadi, Wardha. Four miles he covered on foot and one mile in a bullock cart. A few co-workers from Maganwadi accompanied him, in order to carry his scanty luggage. One of the companions argued: "Don't you think, rather than bury yourself in this village, you should undertake a tour through the country, just for the rural reconstruction programme? I cannot tell you what a godsend that Harijan tour was, how it worked a silent revolution in people's minds. Nothing else could have achieved it. Could you not take a tour like that?"

"No," said Gandhi, "there is no similarity between the two cases. In Harijan work, the practical and the theoretical aspects were combined. Here I cannot combine the two. I have been talking theory all these days, talking and giving advice on village work, without having personally come to grips with the difficulties of village work. If I undertook the tour, say, after passing three seasons in a village and among villagers, a year hence, I should be able to talk with the knowledge and experience which I have not got today. Yesterday I went to Sindi to see how Gajanan Naik was working. The condition of things there is scarcely better, but he is carrying on his work, patiently and perseveringly. The moment I saw him last morning I said to myself, 'If I had been working with Gajanan, I should certainly have had intimate experience of the difficulties he is meeting with.' It is clearer to me than ever before that my place is in the village."

And there at Segaon, Gandhi was soon at work, though his hut was not yet ready. A place to sit in and work had been rigged up out of split-bamboo matting, which served as roof and wicker-work walls fastened to the tree which protected him from the sun. A well with crystal clear water made the place slightly cooler than its warm surroundings.

The annual meeting of the Village Industries Association, which was to have been held at three o'clock on May 7 at Wardha, had to be adjourned for want of quorum. The adjourned meeting met the same day at eight, when Gandhi addressed the members as to the difficulties of the task before them. There were difficulties real and difficulties fanciful, to which Gandhi referred at length in his speech

and exhorted them to go on with their task undeterred by them. "I take it," he said, "that those who are members of the A.-I.V.I.A. know the rules of the association, one of which is that there is to be an annual general meeting. Either such a meeting is necessary or it is not. If it is, surely it is the duty of every member to attend the meeting, unless he is unavoidably absent. What I cannot understand is that the absentees have not all written to say what prevented them from attending the meeting. The feeling on the part of an individual member that his absence alone cannot affect the quorum is obviously wrong. Our ambition is to make at least one member for each of our 700,000 villages, but our actual membership is 517. And the bulk of the members are not present. It is deplorable, but it does not dismay me. Let those who are present carry to the absentees at least this message, that it was their duty to inform the secretary as to the reason of their failure. Failure even to intimate the reason argues lethargy, which certainly should disqualify one to be the member of an association like ours.

"Some members talk of difficulties created from outside. I think most of them are imaginary. How much have we been able to do where there are no difficulties from outside? Take Sindi and Segaon where Gajanan and Mirabehn have both been working with a zeal and rural-mindedness that every one of us might envy. How much have they achieved that could be shown? The reason is the inertia, the lethargy of our people, the masters. We want them to do something, that is, to keep the surroundings clean, to eat wholesome food and to regulate their working hours so as to increase their income. They have no faith in all this. They have lost hope of bettering their lot. We have to tackle the triple malady which holds our villages fast in its grip: want of corporate sanitation, deficient diet and inertia.

"In Segaon, where Mirabehn is now working, all the outside circumstances are more favourable than anywhere else. The zamindars there are Jamnalalji and Babasaheb Deshmukh. They place no obstacles; they, on the contrary, help her. And yet, do you think she gets much co-operation from the people? Not that they are wilfully obstructive. They are not interested in their own welfare. They don't appreciate modern sanitary methods. They don't want to exert themselves beyond scratching their farms or doing such labour as they are used to. These difficulties are real and serious. But they must not baffle us. We must have an unquenchable faith in our mission. We

must be patient with the people. We are ourselves novices in village work. We have to deal with a chronic disease. Perseverance and patience, if we have them, overcome mountains of difficulties. We are like nurses who may not leave their patients, because they are reported to have an incurable disease.

"The only way is to sit down in their midst and to work away in steadfast faith, as their scavengers, their nurses, their servants, not as their patrons, and forget all our prejudices and our prepossessions. Let us for a moment forget even swaraj, and certainly forget the 'haves', whose presence oppresses us at every step. They are there. There are many who are dealing with these big problems. Let us tackle the humbler village work which is necessary now, and would be, even after we have reached our goal. Indeed, the village work when it becomes successful will itself bring us nearer the goal."

During his stay at Wardha, Gandhi addressed the students of the training school of village workers. He explained to them the genesis of the school and placed before them the ideal towards which they had to work. He said:

"You are here not for a career in the current sense of the term. Today man's worth is measured in rupees, annas, pies, and a man's educational training is an article of commerce. If you have come with that measure in minds, you are doomed to disappointment. At the end of your studies, you may start with an honorarium of ten rupees and end there. You may not compare it with what a manager of a great firm or a high official gets. We have to change the current standards. We promise you no earthly careers, in fact, we want to wean you from any ambition of that kind. You are expected to bring your food-bill within six rupees a month. And, I presume, you do not value your qualifications in metal. You delight in giving your service to the country for a mere pittance. A man may earn thousands of rupees on the stock exchange but may be thoroughly useless for our purposes. They would be unhappy in our humble surroundings, and we should be unhappy in theirs. We want ideal labourers in the country's cause. They will not bother about what food they get, or what comforts they are assured by the villagers when they serve. They will trust to God for whatever they need, and will exult in the trials and tribulations they might have to undergo. This is inevitable in our country, where we have 700,000 villages to think of. We cannot afford to have a salaried staff of workers, who have an eye to regular

increments, provident funds and pensions. Faithful service of the villagers is its own satisfaction.

"Some of you will be tempted to ask if this is also the standard for the villagers. Not by any means. These prospects are for us the servants and not for the village folk our masters. We have sat on their backs all these years, and we want to accept voluntary and increasing poverty in order that our masters' lot may be better than it is today. We have to enable them to earn much more than they are earning today. That is the aim of the Village Industries Association. It cannot prosper unless it has an ever-increasing number of servants such as I have described. May you be such servants."

To Nandi And Back

1936

Gandhi devoted all his energy to village uplift work. The Harijan question was in the fore and Dr. Ambedkar had gone to see Gandhi at Segaon, to discuss it. The Harijan Sevak Sangh under the able secretaryship of Thakkar Bapa had spread its activities throughout India. A temple entry agitation was in full swing at Trivandrum. The Christian missionaries began to rush into Travancore and elsewhere in order to convert the untouchables and make the best of the situation. They tried to convert simple people by citing to them Christ's miracles. Some of the missionaries started discussions with Gandhi. A priest wrote: "Even if, as you profess to believe, Christ was only one of the many incarnations of God, and the latest of them, you must either accept His tremendous claims as of divine origin, or reject them as only human and infallible. I pray daily that Christ may grant you a revelation of Himself as he did it to Saul of Tarsus, that before you pass off this earthly scene, you may be used to proclaim to India's millions the sacrificial efficacy of his precious blood." Through *Harijan*, dated April 18, 1936, Gandhi replied to this correspondent and others, who argued in the same strain:

"My correspondent is a literalist. He gives its literal meaning to every text of the Bible, in spite of its clear statement, that 'the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life.' My first reading of the Bible showed me that I would be repelled by many things in it, if I gave their literal meaning to many texts or even took every passage in it as the word of God. I found as I proceeded with my study of the scriptures of the various religions that every scripture had to be treated likewise, not excepting the Vedas or the Upanishads. Therefore, the story of the immaculate conception, when I interpret it mystically, does not repel me. I should find it hard to believe in the literal meaning of the verses relating to the immaculate conception of Jesus. Nor would it deepen my regard for Jesus if I gave those verses their literal meaning.

This does not mean that the writers of the Gospels were untruthful persons. They wrote in a mood of exaltation. From my youth upward I learnt the art of estimating the value of scriptures on the basis of their ethical teaching. Miracles had no interest for me. The miracles said to have been performed by Jesus, even if I had believed them literally, would not have reconciled me to any teaching that did not satisfy universal ethics. Somehow, words of religious teachers have for me, as I presume for the millions, a living force which the same words uttered by ordinary mortals do not possess.

"Jesus, to me, is a great world teacher among others. He was to the devotees of his generation no doubt 'the only begotten son of God'. Their belief need not be mine. He affects my life no less because I regard him as one among the many begotten sons of God. The adjective 'begotten' has a deeper and possibly a grander meaning than its spiritual birth. In his own times he was the nearest to God.

"Jesus atoned for the sins of those, who accepted his teachings, by being an infallible example to them. But the example was worth nothing to those who never troubled to change their own lives. A regenerate outgrows the original taint, even as purified gold outgrows the original alloy.

"I have made the frankest admission of many sins. But I do not carry their burden on my shoulders. If I am journeying godward, as I feel I am, it is safe with me. For I feel the warmth of the sunshine of His presence. My austerities, fastings and prayers are, I know, of no value, if I rely upon them for reforming me. But they have an inestimable value, if they represent, as I hope they do, the yearnings of a soul, striving to lay his weary head in the lap of his Maker.

"The Gita has become for me the key to the scriptures of the world. It unravels, for me, the deepest mysteries to be found in them. I regard them with the same reverence, that I pay to the Hindu scriptures. Hindus, Musalmans, Christians, Parsis, Jews are convenient labels. But when I tear them down, I do not know which is which. We are all children of the same God. 'Verily verily I say unto you, not every one that sayeth unto me, "Lord, Lord", shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven shall enter the Kingdom,' was said, though in different words, by all the great teachers of the world."

Harijan devoted its columns exclusively to constructive work and it never even did refer to the Congress or to politics. On May 16,

however, Gandhi made an exception and wrote on the death of Dr. Ansari:

"It is not usual in these columns to have obituary notices of all great men who pass away. This journal is devoted to a special cause. Such notices are taken generally only of those who had specially identified themselves with Harijan cause. I had to use extraordinary self-restraint to avoid noticing Kamala Nehru's death. It almost became an oppression. But I need exercise no such restraint about Dr. Ansari's death. For, he was essentially a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity with Hakim Saheb Ajmal Khan. Dr. Ansari never wavered in his faith, even when it was put to a severe test. He was an orthodox Musalman proud of his descent from the helpers of the Prophet when the latter was most in need of help. His very staunchness and his intimate knowledge of Islam made him a believer in Hindu-Muslim unity. It is no exaggeration to say that he had at least as many Hindu friends as he had Musalman friends. He was one of the ablest physicians in India. His advice was freely available to the poor of all races. And what he earned from the princes and the rich men, he spent with both hands among his many needy friends. No beggar approached him without emptying whatever his pocket contained, and he never counted what he gave. He was a tower of strength to hundreds of men and women who swore by him. I have no doubt that he has left many literally weeping for the personal loss they have sustained. He has left a wife who is a philosopher, though invalid. She is too brave and too much of a believer to shed a tear over her loss. But the many whom I have in mind are no philosophers. Their faith in God is vapoury; their faith in Dr. Ansari was living. It was no fault of theirs that their faith in God was weak as with most of us. They had many proofs of the doctor's friendship when they thought God had forsaken them. They little knew that even the great doctor could only help them so long as His Maker allowed him. Would that what he could not accomplish while he was alive would be accomplished by his death."

In the third week of May, Gandhi left for Nandi Hill, to have some rest. One of the distinguished visitors who came to see him was Sir C. V. Raman in company of Professor Rahm from Switzerland. "He has discovered," said Raman, "an insect that can live without food and water for twelve years, and has come to India for further researches in biology."

"When you discover the secret at the back of it," merrily pleaded Gandhi, "please pass it on to me."

"But," said the biologist, "I am a scientist and a monk also, and when I decided to come to pay my respects to you, I thought of asking you a question or two." Dr. Rahm was perplexed by the many warring creeds in the world and wondered if there was no way of ending the conflict.

"It depends on the Christians," said Gandhi. "If only they would make up their minds to unite with others! But they will not do so. Their solution is universal acceptance of Christianity, as they believe it. An English friend has been at me for the past thirty years trying to persuade me that there is nothing but damnation in Hinduism and I must accept Christianity. When I was in jail I got from separate sources no less than three copies of *Life of Sister Therese,* in the hope that I should follow her example and accept Jesus as the only begotten son of God and my Saviour. I read the book prayerfully but I could not accept even St. Therese's testimony. I must say I have an open mind, if indeed at this stage and age of my life I can be said to have an open mind on this question. Anyway, I claim to have an open mind in this sense that if things were to happen to me as they did to Saul before he became Paul, I should not hesitate to be converted. But today I rebel against orthodox Christianity, as I am convinced that it has distorted the message of Jesus. He was an Asiatic whose message was delivered through many media and when it had the backing of a Roman emperor, it became an imperialist faith as it remains to this day. Of course, there are noble but rare exceptions, but the general trend is as I have indicated."

Dr. Rahm put another question, "If we cannot unite, can't we fight atheism which seems to be so much on the increase?" Raman who was sitting all this while as passive listener now said: "I shall answer your question. If there is a God we must look for Him in the universe. If He is not there, He is not worth looking for. I am being looked upon in various quarters as an atheist, but I am not. The growing discoveries in the science of astronomy and physics seem to me to be further and further revelations of God. Mahatmaji, religions cannot unite. Science offers the best opportunity for a complete fellowship. All men of science are brothers."

"What about the converse?" asked Gandhi. "All who are not men of science are not brothers?"

Raman saw the joke and said, "But all can become men of science." Then said Gandhi, "You will have to present a Kalma of science as Islam presents one."

In May came the report that Gandhi's eldest son, Harilal Gandhi, had accepted Islam in the midst of a large congregation in a mosque in Bombay. Gandhi published in *Harijan* all facts about his son's life in the article, "To my numerous Muslim Friends":

"If this acceptance was from the heart and free from any worldly considerations, I should have no quarrel. For, I believe Islam to be as true a religion, as my own.

"But I have the gravest doubt about this acceptance being from the heart or free from selfish considerations. Every one who knows my son Harilal knows that he has been for years addicted to the drink evil and has been in the habit of visiting houses of ill fame. For some years he has been living on the charity of friends who have helped him unstintingly. He is indebted to some Pathans from whom he had borrowed on heavy interest. Up to only recently he was in dread of his life from his Pathan creditors in Bombay. Now he is the hero of the hour in that city. He had a devoted wife who forgave his many sins including his unfaithfulness. He has three grown-up children, two daughters and one son, whom he ceased to support long ago.

"Not many weeks ago he wrote to the press complaining against Hindus—not Hinduism—and threatening to go over to Christianity or Islam. The language of the letter showed quite clearly that he would go over to the highest bidder. That letter had the desired effect. Through the good offices of one Hindu councillor, he got a job in Nagpur Municipality. And he came out with another letter to the press about recalling the first and declaring emphatic adherence to his ancestral faith.

"But, as events have proved, his pecuniary ambition was not satisfied, and in order to satisfy that ambition, he has embraced Islam. There are other facts which are known to me and which strengthen my inference.

"When I was in Nagpur in April, he had come to see me and his mother and he told me how he was amused by the attentions that were being paid to him by the missionaries of rival faiths. God can work wonders. He has been known to have changed the stoniest of hearts and turned sinners into saints as it were in a moment. Nothing will please me better than to find that during the Nagpur meeting

and the Friday announcement he had repented of the past and had suddenly become a changed man, having shed the drink habit and sexual lust.

"But press reports give no such evidence. He still delights in sensation and in good living. If he had changed, he would have written to me to gladden my heart. All my children have had the greatest freedom of thought and action. They have been taught to regard all religions with the same respect that they paid to their own. Harilal knew that if he had told me that he had found the key to a right life and peace in Islam, I would have put no obstacle in his path. But no one of us, including his son, now twenty-four years old, and who is with me, knew anything about the event till we saw the announcement in the press.

"My views on Islam are well known to the Musalmans, who are reported to have enthused over my son's profession. A brotherhood of Islam has telegraphed to me thus: 'Expect like your son, you a truth-seeker to embrace Islam, truest religion of world.'

"I must confess that all this has hurt me. I sense no religious spirit behind this demonstration. I feel that those who are responsible for Harilal's acceptance of Islam did not take the most ordinary precautions they ought to have in a case of this kind. His apostasy is no loss to Hinduism and his admission to Islam a source of weakness to it, if, as I fear he remains the same wreck that he was before.

"Surely conversion is a matter between man and his Maker who alone knows His creatures' hearts. And conversion without a clean heart is a denial of God and religion. Conversion without cleanness of heart can only be a matter for sorrow, not joy, to a godly person.

"My object in addressing these lines to numerous Muslim friends is to ask them to examine Harilal in the light of his immediate past and if they find that his conversion is a soulless matter, to tell him so plainly and disown him, and if they discover sincerity in him, to see that he is protected against temptations, so that his sincerity results in his becoming a god-fearing member of society. Let them know that excessive indulgence has softened his brain and undermined the sense of right and wrong, truth and falsehood. I do not mind whether he is known as Abdulla or Harilal, if by adopting one name for the other, he becomes a true devotee of God, which both the names mean."

Kasturbai, in a pathetic letter to her son Harilal, wrote: "I do not know what to say to you. I have been pleading with you all these long

years to hold yourself in check. But you have been going from bad to worse. Think of the misery you are causing to your aged parents in the evening of their lives. Your father says nothing to anyone, but I know how the shocks you are giving him are breaking his heart. Though born as a son, you are indeed behaving like an enemy. I am told that in your recent wanderings you have been criticizing and rediculing your great father. You little realize that you only disgrace yourself by speaking evil of your father. He has nothing but love in his heart for you. You know that he attaches the greatest importance to purity of conduct. But you have never paid any heed to his advice. Yet he has offered to keep you with him, to feed and clothe you, and even nurse you. He has so many other responsibilities in this world. He cannot do more for you. He can only lament his fate. God has given him great will power and may God grant him as long a life as he may require for fulfilling his mission on this earth."

In the wake of son's apostasy Gandhi suffered a loss in the demise of Abbas Tyabji, on June 10. He wrote:

"It was in 1915, I first met Shri Abbas Tyabji. That meeting laid the foundation of a lifelong friendship. I found in him not merely a friend of Harijans, he was himself one. When at Godhra, long ago, I had to the surprise of my audience invited them to have an anti-untouchability conference at the untouchable quarters, Abbas Mian was there taking as lively an interest in the Harijans as any staunch Hindu. Yet he was no ordinary Musalman. He had given lavishly to the cause of Islam and was supporting several Islamic institutions. And yet he had never any designs upon Harijans. His Islam had room for all the great religions of the earth. Hence he looked at the anti-untouchability campaign with the fervour of a Hindu. And I know that he retained that fervour to the end of his time on this earth.

"He was a rare servant of humanity. He was a servant of India because he was a servant of humanity. He believed in God as Daridranarayan. He believed that God was to be found in the humblest cottages and among the despised of the earth. He is not dead, though his body rests in the grave. His life is an inspiration for us all."

In the second week of June, Gandhi left Nandi Hill and launched upon his activities. Speaking at the South Indian Harijan Workers' Conference at Kangeri, near Bangalore, he made some general observations for the benefit of Caste Hindus: "This movement for the removal of untouchability is different from other current movements

in India so far as I am concerned, and so far as the Harijan Sevak Sangh is concerned, the anti-untouchability movement is not a political movement. Nor is it intended purely for the economic amelioration of the Harijans nor yet for their social regeneration. But this does not mean that we do not aim at the Harijans' social, economic or political advancement. We want all these improvements. If we are honest about our work, progress in these directions is bound to follow from our efforts. But our goal is quite different. It is this: that untouchability is a blot upon Hinduism and must be removed at any cost. Untouchability is a poison which, if we do not get rid of in time, will destroy Hinduism."

During the conference, which lasted for three days, Gandhi was asked several questions by the Harijan workers. On the last day he made a general statement on the question of conversion:

"We should do nothing, having in view the threat of conversions. For, I am sure that everything that you will do merely to stop them will fail of its purpose. Conversions or no conversions, we have to redouble our efforts in order to remove all disabilities under which Harijans are labouring. The reaction that we should do something because of the threat of conversions was bound to take place, as we are human beings. We may, therefore, take note of the fact, but do nothing because of it. If we redouble our efforts because of the threat, we shall slacken our efforts immediately the threat was empty. Either way, if we slacken our effort, we shall be harming the cause. Harijans will feel that the whole of our agitation was, like a soda water bottle affair, momentary, and that there is now going to be nothing more. Our movement is essentially religious and independent of political vicissitudes. There can, therefore, be only greater and greater dedication on our part. What shall we, a handful of us do for the cause, when we find that thousands and thousands of our people are wholly indifferent and will do nothing beyond passing a few resolutions? Somehow or other, they do not feel that these resolutions are addressed to them individually. Years ago eloquent speeches used to be made on swadeshi, but speakers did not feel that they were bound to carry out what they said. They took shelter under the phrase 'as far as possible'. There is no 'as far as possible' on the question of untouchability. If it is to go, it must go in its entirety, from temples as from everywhere else. So if the thousands who passed the resolutions in Travancore were serious when they raised their hands, no

power on earth can prevent the entry of Harijans into temples. Those of us, therefore, who are working for the removal of untouchability must convince the Harijans of our bona fides. I have, however, a suspicion that all who have come here are not as thorough in their action as they should be. Most of you do not go far enough in identifying yourselves with the Harijans' difficulties. You will say, 'We believe in the removal of untouchability only to the extent of the Harijan Sevak Sangh programme.' If Harijan workers take shelter under this 'thus far and no further', it will be difficult to convince Harijans that we are sincere. Naturally Harijans want to have positive proofs of daily increasing progress. They want to rise to the highest status that a Hindu is capable of. I ask you, therefore, not to leave this conference without discussing the difficulties that face us. If all our workers were capable of making cent per cent delivery of goods and of becoming cent per cent Harijans voluntarily, it would be well with us.

"I do not want to blame anyone, I am simply thinking aloud. It is a question of ourselves feeling the thing. This cannot happen except with the conviction that if untouchability does not go Hinduism will perish. I would go further and say: 'I would pray that a religion which damns any human beings, because they were born in a particular section, should perish.' And I want you, if you feel with me, to pray that it ought to perish, if this blot on humanity is not removed. That points to the necessity of our becoming Harijans in every sense of the term. Does it mean we should start eating carrion or drinking or living filthily? No, we must feel miserable whenever they feel miserable, and try to remove all that makes them miserable. Let us never say their misery is due to their *karma*, but let us say that we have made up our minds to discharge at least a portion of our debts to them. Let us ask ourselves every morning and every evening, if we have done anything in discharge of that debt. Unless we do this all our resolutions will be a fruitless effort."

On the eve of his departure from Bangalore, Gandhi delivered a convocation address to the students of Hindi Prachar Mandal. "I shall take this occasion," he said, "to give you a few obvious reasons why Hindi or Hindustani alone can be the national language."

"So long as you live in Karnatak and do not look out of it, a knowledge of Kannada is enough for you. But a look at any one of your villages is enough to show that your outlook and your horizon have

widened, you no longer think in the terms of Karnatak, but in the terms of India. But the interest cannot obviously go very far without a common medium of expression. How is a Karnatak man to establish and maintain contact with men from Sind or U.P.? Some of our people have held and perhaps still hold that English would certainly do. But I am sure none of you will be satisfied with that. You and I want millions of people to establish inter-provincial contacts, and they can't obviously do so through English for generations to come, if ever. There is no reason why they should all learn English, and it certainly is no sure or substantial means of winning a livelihood. Its value for this object will, if anything, become less and less as more people come to learn it. Then Hindi-Hindustani offers no difficulty in studying as English must. Study of it is never going to take the time that the study of English would do. It has been estimated that the number of Hindus and Musalmans speaking and understanding Hindi-Hindustani exceeds 200 millions. Would not the eleven million of men and women of Karnatak like to learn a language that is spoken by 200 millions of their brothers and sisters? And can they not very easily learn it? You have all listened to the Kannada translation of Lady Raman's Hindi speech. You could not but have noticed that the translation adopted unaltered quite a large number of words which Lady Raman had used in her Hindi speech—words like *prem, premi, sangh, adhyaksha, pada, ananta, bhakti, swagata, adhyakshata, sammelan.* All these words are common to Hindi and Kannada. Now supposing some one was translating Lady Raman's Hindi speech into English, could he have retained any of these words? By no means. The English equivalent of every one of these words would be new to the listeners. When, therefore, our Kannada friends say that Hindi is difficult for them, they amuse me no less than they make me angry and impatient. I am sure it is a matter of few hours' careful study for a month. I am sixty-seven and have not many years before me, but I assure you that when I listened to the Kannada translation, I felt as though, I should not take more than eight days to learn Kannada if I gave a few hours to it every day. With the exception of half a dozen like Srinivasa Sastri and myself, all of you here are quite young. Have you not energy enough to devote to a study of Hindi four hours each day for just one month? Do you think it is too much to devote this time to cultivate a contact with 200 million of your own countrymen? Now suppose those of you who do not know English

decided to learn English. Do you think any one of you would be able to learn the language in a month by devoting four hours to it each day? By no means. The reason why Hindi is so ridiculously easy is that all the languages, including even the four South Indian, spoken by Hindus in India, contain a large number of Sanskrit words. It is a matter of history that contact in the old days between the south and north used to be maintained by means of Sanskrit. Even today the *shastris* in the south hold discourses with the *shastris* in the north through Sanskrit. The difference in the various vernaculars is mainly of grammar. In the North Indian languages even the grammatical structure is identical. The grammar of the South Indian languages is, of course, vastly different, and even their vocabularies, before they came under the influence of Sanskrit, were equally different. But now even these languages have adopted a very large number of Sanskrit words, so much so, that I have not found it difficult, whenever I have gone south, to get a gist of what was being spoken in all the four languages.

"I come now to our Muslim friends. They know the vernaculars of their provinces and Urdu in addition. There is no difference whatsoever between Hindi and Urdu or Hindustani. The grammar is common to both, it is only the script that makes the difference, and when one comes to think of it one finds that the three words Hindi, Hindustani and Urdu denote only one language. If we were to refer to the lexicons of these languages, we should find that most of the words are the same. For them, therefore, barring the question of script which will adjust itself, there is no difficulty whatsoever.

"To return, therefore, to where I began, if your horizon goes as far as Srinagar in the north and Cape Comorin in the south, Karachi in the west and Dibrugarh in the east—as indeed it should—there is for you nothing but to learn Hindi. English, I have shown to you, cannot be our lingua franca. I have no prejudice against English. A knowledge of English is necessary for a few scholars, it is necessary for international contacts, and for a knowledge of the sciences pursued in the West. But I am pained when an attempt is made to give English a place it cannot take. That attempt, I have no doubt, is bound to fail. Every thing looks proper in its own place.

"There is a scare of which I should like to disabuse your minds. Is Hindi to be taught at the expense of Kannada? Is it likely to oust Kannada? On the contrary, I claim that the more we propagate

Hindi, the more shall we stimulate a study of our vernaculars, and even improve their power and potency. I say this from my experience of different provinces.

"A word about the question of script. Even when I was in South Africa, I thought that all the languages derived from Sanskrit should have Devanagari script, and I am certain that even the Dravidian languages could be easily learnt through the Devanagari script. I have tried to learn Tamil and Telugu through the Tamil and Telugu scripts, as also Kannada and Malayalam, for a few days, through their respective scripts. I tell you I was frightfully upset over having to learn four scripts when I could see that if the four languages had a common script, Devanagari, I should learn them in no time. What a terrible strain it is on those like me who are anxious to learn the four languages! As between the speakers of the four South Indian vernaculars, does it need any argument to show that the Devanagari would be the most convenient script for the speaker of one to learn the other three? The question of Hindi as lingua franca need not be mixed up with the question of script, but I have referred to this in order to point out the difficulty of those who want to know all the Indian languages."

"I am inconsistent," he wrote, "when I tolerate both Devanagari and Urdu scripts for the same language. But my inconsistency is not quite foolish. There is Hindu-Muslim friction at the present moment. It is wise and necessary for the educated Hindus and Musalmans to show mutual respect and toleration to the utmost extent possible. And hence the option for Devanagari or Urdu scripts. Happily there is no friction between provinces and provinces. Hence the desirability of advocating a reform which means closer knitting together of provinces in more ways than one. And let it be remembered that the vast mass of the people are wholly illiterate. It would be suicidal to impose on them different scripts for no other reason than a false sentiment and laziness to think."

Silent Plodding

1936

BY THE third week of June Gandhi reached Wardha and walked to Segaon in drenching rain. He walked on through the mud and in three hours he reached his destination, where he was to live in a one-room hut. He advised everyone coming to Segaon to walk, and not to think of a cart. Mahadev Desai every day walked eleven miles to do his secretarial work.

At the end of June, Gandhi walked to Wardha every morning to attend the Working Committee meeting which was faced with a crisis. Some of the committee members were not in agreement with Nehru's socialist views, which he put forward from every platform, and they offered their resignations from the Working Committee. However, owing to the intervention of Gandhi, the resignations were withdrawn but the differences were not ironed out.

Nehru was experiencing many difficulties right from the Lucknow Congress and he poured out his heart to Gandhi in a letter written soon after the Wardha session of the committee: "Ever since I left Wardha, I have been feeling weak in body and troubled in mind. Partly this is no doubt due to physical causes, but partly also it is due to other causes which touch the mind and the spirit directly. Since my return from Europe, I have found that meetings of the Working Committee exhaust me greatly; they have a devitalizing effect on me, and I have almost the feeling of being much older in years after every fresh experience. I should not be surprised, if this feeling was shared by my colleagues of the committee. It is an unhealthy experience and it comes in the way of effective work.

"I was told, when I returned from Europe, that the country was demoralized and hence we had to go slow. My own little experience during the past four months has not confirmed this impression. Indeed, I have found a bubbling vitality wherever I have gone, and I have been surprised at the public response . . . I am grateful to you

for the trouble you took in smoothing over matters and in helping to avoid a crisis. I was convinced then, and I am convinced now, that a break of the kind suggested would have had serious consequences for all our work, including the elections. And yet, and yet, where are we now and what does the future hold for us? I have written at length, both in my book and, subsequently, about my present ideas. These views are not casual. They are part of me and though I might change them or vary them in future, so long as I hold them, I must give expression to them. Because I attached importance to a larger unity I tried to express them in the mildest way possible, and more as an invitation to thought than as fixed conclusions. I saw no conflict in this approach and in anything that the Congress was doing."

On July 7, 1936, Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel, of the Congress Parliamentary Committee, inaugurated election campaign in Bombay. With a fixed intention of resigning from the presidentship of the Congress and leaving the matter to the August session of the A.-I.C.C., Nehru undertook an election campaign. On July 20, the civil war in Spain started and he was greatly disturbed. He said: "I saw this rising developing into a European or even a world conflict. Crisis on the biggest scale seemed to be at hands and India's part in this was to me a vital matter. My mind became tense with expectation and all thought of resignation left it." Nehru preached united front with the progressive forces.

There were press reports to the effect that the gulf between Gandhi and Nehru was increasing. Gandhi exploded the myth under "Are We Rivals?" in *Harijan* dated July 25:

"I have had two typical cuttings sent to me giving altogether false news about relations between Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and myself. Remarks said to have been made by me have been reproduced in quotation marks. Thus I am reported to have said, 'My life-work is ruined' (that is, by Jawaharlal's programme); 'not even the firmness and repression of the British Government have harmed my work as much as the policy outlined by Nehru.'

"I have never said anything of the kind, nor uttered one single remark attributed to me in the articles sent to me. What is more I have not even entertained the opinions contained in those articles. So far as I am aware, Jawaharlal has come to the conclusion that India's freedom cannot be gained by violent means and that it can be gained by non-violent means. And I know for a fact that he did

not in Lucknow 'come out for the use of violence in the struggle for independence'.

"No doubt there are differences of opinion between us. They were clearly set forth in the letters we exchanged some years ago. But they do not affect our personal relations in any way whatsoever. We remain the same adherents to the Congress goal, that we have ever been. My life-work is not, cannot be ruined by Jawaharlal's programme, nor have I ever believed for that matter that it has been harmed even by 'the firmness and repression of the British Government'. My philosophy, if I can be said to have any, excludes the possibility of harm to one's cause by outside agencies. The harm comes deservedly and only when the cause itself is bad, or being good its champions are untrue, faint-hearted, or unclean. The article in question refers to 'Gandhi's secret plans'. If I know Gandhi at all, I can vouchsafe for it that he never had any secret plans in his life. And if beyond what the readers of *Harijan* know there is no plan that I can disclose, it is because I know none myself. Then one of the articles presents Jawaharlal and me as rivals. I cannot think of myself as a rival to Jawaharlal or him to me. Or, if we are, we are rivals in making love to each other in the pursuit of the common goal. And if in the joint work for reaching the goal, we at times seem to be taking different routes, I hope the world will find that we had lost sight of each other only for the moment and only to meet again with greater mutual attraction and affection."

Gandhi backed Nehru and the friction between the president and the Working Committee lessened. In Bombay, when the committee met on August 22, a new atmosphere seemed to prevail and the election manifesto based on progressive ideas was agreed to by the committee members without much argument and was adopted by the A.-I.C.C.

The Congress election manifesto placed in the forefront the aim of complete national independence and of a constituent assembly, condemned without any reservation the imperialist constitution and explained the purpose of sending representatives to the legislatures "not to co-operate in any way with the act, but to combat it and seek to end it." At the same time, the election manifesto did not rest on the basis of general principles. It set out also a concrete, immediate programme, both of democratic demands for civil liberties and equal rights, and also a social and economic programme capable of

appealing to the broadest masses of the people. Important passages in this historic document were:

"The Congress realizes that independence cannot be achieved through these legislatures, nor can the problems of poverty and unemployment be effectively tackled by them. Nevertheless, the Congress places its general programme before the people of India so that they may know what it stands for and what it will try to achieve, whenever it has the power to do so.

"The most important and urgent problem of the country is the appalling poverty, unemployment, and indebtedness of peasantry, fundamentally due to the antiquated and regressive land tenure and revenue systems, and intensified in recent years by the great slump in prices of agricultural produce . . .

"The Congress reiterates its declaration made at Karachi, that it stands for a reform of the system of land tenure and revenue and rent, and equitable adjustment of the burden on agricultural land, giving immediate relief to the smaller peasantry by a substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue.

"The question of indebtedness requires urgent consideration and the formulation of a scheme including the declaration of a moratorium, and inquiry into and scaling down of debts and the provision of cheap credit facilities by the state. This relief should extend to the agricultural tenants, peasant proprietors, small landholders, and petty traders.

"In regard to the industrial workers, the policy of the Congress is to secure to them decent standard of living, hours of work and conditions of labour, in conformity, as far as the economic conditions of the country permit, with international standards, suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employers and workmen, protection against the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment, and the right of workers to form unions and to strike for the protection of their interests.

"The Congress has already declared that it stands for the removal of all sex disabilities, whether legal or social, or in any sphere of public activity. It has expressed itself in the favour of the maternity benefits and the protection of women workers. The women of India have already taken a leading part in the freedom struggle, and the Congress looks forward to their sharing, in an equal measure with the men of India, the privileges and obligations of a free India."

The Muslim League had also issued an election manifesto. To all appearance the social policy it advocated was much the same as the Congress policy. The League was to play its part in building a new "social edifice", though it would oppose "any movement that aims at expropriation of private property". Industrial development, uplift of the rural population, the relief of agricultural indebtedness—all this was common ground. As to the constitution the position taken up by Jinnah in the assembly was reaffirmed. The federal scheme was condemned. The provincial scheme was also severely criticized, but it was to be worked "for what it was worth". As regards separate electorates, the League manifesto preferred to omit those two words. However, the Muslim claim was advanced indirectly in the course of the brief history of the League since its inception in 1906 with which the manifesto opened. The Lucknow Pact of 1916 was hailed as "one of the greatest beacon lights in the constitutional history of India" and as "a signal proof of the identity of purpose between the two great sections of the people of India". From that time onwards, Muslims had "stood shoulder to shoulder with sister communities in the cause of Indian freedom. If they demanded that their minority position should be safeguarded in the structure of the constitution, that was not communalism. Anyone conversant with the world history would realize that this was a natural claim and that its acceptance was essential in order to obtain the whole-hearted and willing co-operation of the minorities who must be made to feel that they can rely upon the majority with a complete sense of confidence and security."

The election campaign was on. Gandhi kept clear of politics and confined himself to Segaon and kept himself busy with his constructive work. Visitors from far and near came to seek advice and discuss matters. On a rainy day in August, came M. Maurice Frydman, a Polish engineer. He inquired if Gandhi's aim was just humanitarian in settling down in Segaon village, just serving the villagers as best as he could.

"I am here to serve no one else but myself," he said, "to find my own self-realization, through the service of these village folk. Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, political, social and religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way

to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. And this cannot be done except through one's country. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of the humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbours. They have become so helpless, so resourceless, so inert that I must concentrate on serving them. If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity."

"But some comforts may be necessary even for man's spiritual advancement," said Frydman. "One could not advance himself by identifying himself with the discomfort and squalor of the villager."

"A certain degree of physical harmony and comfort is necessary," said Gandhi, "but above a certain level, it becomes a hindrance instead of help. Therefore, the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfaction of one's physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one's narrow self, must meet at a certain point a dead stop, before it degenerates into physical and intellectual voluptuousness. A man must arrange his physical and cultural circumstances, so that they do not hinder him in his service of humanity, on which all his energies should be concentrated."

"I have been saying," he continued, "that if untouchability stays, Hinduism goes; even so I would say that if the village perishes India will perish. It will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost. The revival of the village is possible, only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to the villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others."

It was interesting to watch one morning a number of naked and half-naked urchins collected in the veranda of Gandhi's hut. Their eyes were fixed on a snake in a glass jar, which was the new exhibit at Segaon. A fair number of snakes were to be found there during the season. There were, therefore, some cases of snake-bites, and in all cases the villagers killed the snakes at sight. "That is hardly proper

or necessary," said Gandhi, explaining the presence of the exhibit. "We cannot tell a poisonous from a non-poisonous snake and, therefore, we kill all without discrimination. The bulk of them are non-poisonous, and in many cases it is the fright that kills the victim of snake-bite. The snakes have their places in the agricultural economy of the village, but our villagers do not seem to realize it. They perform a particularly useful function, in that they clear the fields of rats, vermin and other pests. It is best, therefore, to know the elementary principles of snake lore and to teach them to the villagers. They must know how to distinguish between a poisonous and a non-poisonous snake, they must know that it is not necessary to kill all snakes, which although they may be poisonous do not usually bite, unless they are trodden upon or mishandled, and they must also know that certain snakes at least are useful. With that purpose in view, I have decided to have here snakes alive or dead to be shown to the villagers. This one in the jar was caught alive by an inmate of our household. We have a simple device with which it is easy to catch snakes alive without doing them physical injury, and this one was found clinging to a roof in the farmyard over there. I decided to send it on to the civil surgeon for examination. He was good enough to examine it. He found that it was a krait, one of the most poisonous varieties, and so he killed it and sent it back. I decided to preserve it and sent for a jar with rectified spirit. We had to wait several hours for the jar to come, and when it did come we found on opening the basket that the snake was alive. It seems to be particularly tenacious of life, and so it lingered on until the third day, when we decided to end its pains by immersing it in water. The fact was that the civil surgeon had smashed its brain and stunned it, and as he explained later its spinal cord was intact and, therefore, it had remained alive. I have now got a cage to keep live specimens in. As you see, the little urchins are already being attracted. I have begun to study snake lore and hope to place before the villagers all the broad facts regarding these creatures."

A group of school teachers went to Segaon one morning with the old problem—whether knowledge is virtue: "why was it that though we knew well indeed that a particular course of action was morally wrong, we could not avoid it?"

"Human life," replied Gandhi, "is a series of compromises, and it is not always easy to achieve in practice what one had found to be

true in theory. Take this very simple case. The principle is that all life is one and we have to treat the sinner and the saint alike, as the Gita says, we have to look with an equal eye on a learned pundit and a dog and a dog-eater. But here I am. Though I have not killed the snake, I know I have been instrumental in killing it, I know that I should not have done so. I know, besides, that snakes are *kshetrapals*, guardians of the field, and, therefore, I should not have helped in killing it. But as you see, I have not been able to avoid it. It is no use my thinking that I can't avoid it. I do not give up the principle which is true for all time that all life is one, and I pray to God that He may rid me of the fear of snakes and enable me to achieve the non-violence necessary to handle snakes as we handle other domestics. Take another instance, again a simple one. I know that as a villager and as one who has made it his business to promote village crafts, I must use a village-made razor, but you see that I am using a foreign one. I might have got a village-made razor, if I had written to friends to procure one for me. But I thought I must help village barber, no matter what kind of razor he used. I, therefore, decided to cultivate him, and put up with his dirty clothes and uncouth instruments. But on one thing I could not possibly compromise. He said he would not shave Harijans on the same terms as he was prepared to shave me, and I had to do without his services. Now you find me having a shave with a foreign razor, though it is open to me to procure a village-made one. Here, there is an indefensible compromise. And yet there is an explanation. I have been sticking on to a set of shaving tackle given me by a loving sister, whose gift I could not resist and whose feelings I could not hurt by rejecting the foreign razor and insisting on having a village-made one. But there it is, the compromise is there. I do not commend it for imitation. We must be prepared to displease the dearest ones for the sake of principle."

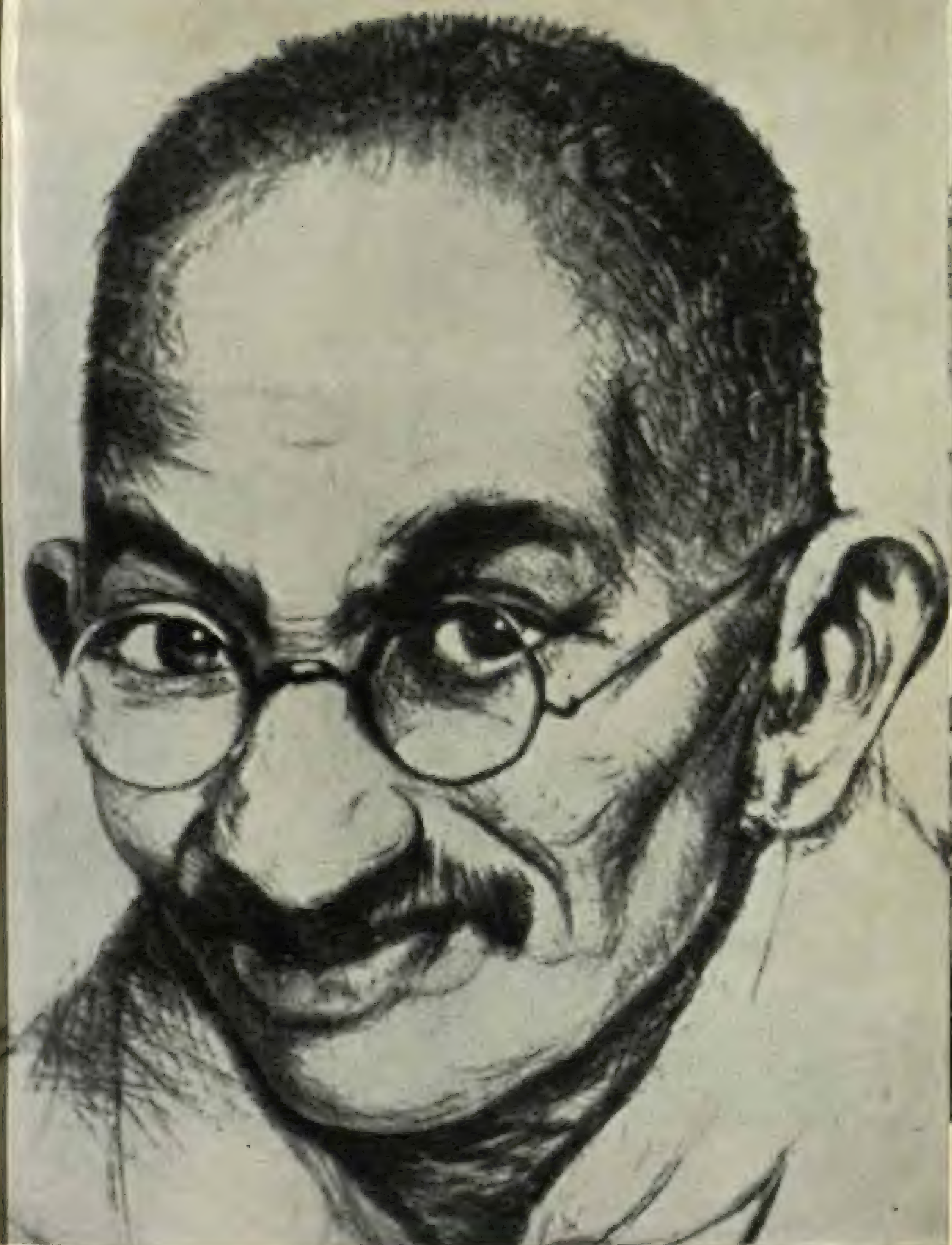
Segaon was terribly unhealthy and during a malaria outbreak in September Gandhi succumbed but made a quick recovery. On his illness, he wrote:

"It went against the grain for me, a confirmed believer in nature-cure methods, to go to Wardha and seek admission to the hospital. Left entirely to myself, I would have treated myself in accordance with nature-cure methods as far as possible. But I could not do so without offending friends who happened to be near me at the time. Having gone to Segaon it was my intention not to stir out of it for full

three seasons, one year. Unfortunately, there are obligations undertaken before the decision to settle in Segaon, which I shall have to fulfil and which will disturb the unbroken year's stay. I urge friends, therefore, not to make further inroads upon the periods. For me it is my *sadhana*. I set the greatest value upon the village problem. . .

"If then I may not leave Segaon in order not to interrupt my instruction and first-hand experience, I may not also leave it for health reasons. Segaon like the most villages has its full share of malaria and other diseases which villagers suffer from. Of its population of 600 there is hardly anyone who has not suffered from malaria or dysentery. Of the record of nearly 200 cases that have come under my observation or Mirabehn's, most are those of malaria and dysentery. The simple remedies at our disposal with dietetic control have served their purpose effectively. The villagers do not go to hospitals, they cannot even go to dispensaries. They usually resort to village quacks or incantations, and drag on their weary existence. I claim to have some workable knowledge of common ailments. I have successfully treated myself often enough without the assistance of medical friends though they have been ever ready to help me in my need. If I was not a 'mahatma' so called, no one would have known anything of the recent attack of malaria. I rarely have fever. The last attack I had was nearly twelve years ago and I had treated myself. There is all the greater reason for me now, if I have another attack of malaria or another ailment, not to stir out of Segaon in search of health; and if I must have medical assistance, I must be satisfied with what I can get without fuss and without having to leave Segaon. One like myself struggling to become a humble village servant surely ought to be satisfied with remedies easily accessible to villages. By leaving my village in search of health, I deny myself the opportunity of knowing what village life can be when one's health is in peril. My malaria has quickened my resolve to study the problem of making Segaon malaria-proof."

By the end of September, though not quite fit, he began gradually to attend to his normal activities. When Jawaharlal, Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad came to Segaon to see Gandhi, they found him too busy giving wet-sheet packs and hip baths to two patients suffering from some kind of enteric fever. "If you have no time," said the Sardar, "we better go." Gandhi smilingly explained how difficult it had been with the patients he had on hand. "But," Jawaharlal asked,



Courtesy: M. Trivedi

A sketch of Gandhi by E. M. Grossman









From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi presiding over All-India Literary Conference, Nagpur, April 1936

During his walk from Wardha to Segaon, April 1936

Photograph: D. G. Tendulkar

Gandhi's hut at Segaon, 1936

Ashram precincts, Segaon

My dear Farid,

Your letter [illegible] on an agreeable shock. Your [illegible] is an almost exact [illegible]. And I wonder how I [illegible] touching letter when [illegible]

Neither Ansari's fortitude nor Zohra's grief [illegible] one. Zohra is a tender flower. [illegible] long of philosophy. She has tasted abundance [illegible]

love that has sustained us all these years. Now the poor girl [illegible] the world. Zohra never [illegible] not even when she is married [illegible] for Zohra was unique. [illegible] was [illegible] not do to make us good & happy? Above all this was not selfless love.

I can understand [illegible] too. He was to you all you deserve [illegible]

[illegible] He was a selfless friend [illegible] Such a man [illegible] spirit sustain us and enable [illegible] ourselves as to prove worthy [of] him.

Your [illegible] approaches me [illegible] and strength. I have none [illegible] still nor do I [illegible] of you all that he had. But if my love for [illegible] can be [illegible] passport for entry to the [illegible] Zohra and others who [illegible] I can present that [illegible] his death has deepened that love whose [illegible] was as sound as [illegible] human love can be.

I hope you are making steady progress.

Nandi Hill
24-5-36

Yours sincerely
M. K. Gandhi

Courtesy : Farid Ansari

Gandhi's letter to Farid Ansari, dated Nandi Hill, May 24, 1936

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi arriving from Segaon to attend Working Committee meeting at Wardha, June 1936

At mass spinning, Wardha, 1936

پیاری بیٹی زہرہ
تمہارے نکاح پر میں تو نہیں
آ سکتا ہوں۔ لیکن میری روح
تو تمہارے ساتھ ہو گی ہی
تم دونوں کے لئے میری
دعا ہے اس روز ملیگی۔ خدا
تم دونوں کو عمر دراز کرے
اور دونوں کو خوش رکھے
باپو کی دعا

سیگاؤں
وردھا
21 9 36

Courtesy : Zora Ansari

Gandhi's letter in Urdu to Zora Ansari, dated Wardha, September 21, 1936



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi with Malaviya, Benares, October 1936



Photograph : S. Bhatia

Gandhi planting a mango tree at Kashi Vidyapith, Benares, October 1936

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi performing the opening ceremony of Bharat Mata Mandir, Benares, October 1936









Courtesy : Capital Studio

Gandhi greeting his 90-year old cousin Khushaldas, Rajkot, October 1936

Gandhi presiding over Gujarati Sahitya Parishad, Ahmedabad, November 1936 *From Sumati Morarjee Collection*

At the evening prayers, Ahmedabad, November 1936 *Courtesy : P. K. Shah*

Photograph : Counsic Bros.

Gandhi with the workers, Segaon, 1936

"isn't it like King Canute trying to stop the waves, or like someone else trying to mop the tide?" "That is why we have made you the King Canute," remarked Gandhi, "so that you may do it better than others." A friend asked, "Must you do all these things yourself?" Gandhi replied: "Who else is to do it? If you go to the village near by, you will find that out of 600 people there 300 are ill. Are they all to go to the hospital? We have to learn to treat ourselves. We are suffering for our own sins. We have brought on all the diseases like malaria, cholera, and the rest, ourselves. How are we to teach these poor villagers except by personal example?"

On October 2, he celebrated his sixty-seventh birthday quietly at Segaon. "I do not recognize my birthday," he wrote to a friend, "I simply recognize it as the day of the birth of the spinning wheel." A fortnight later he left for Benares to open shrine of "Mother India" —a huge relief map of India carved on marble, executed according to the ideas of Babu Shivaprasad. Among those present were Nehru, Ghaffar Khan and many others. "As I was asked," said Gandhi, "to perform the closing ceremony in the morning, and as I listened to the chanting of the Vedic mantras, I thought of a verse in our morning prayer which we have been repeating now for twenty years. 'Mother Earth, Spouse of Vishnu, ocean-clad and mountain-breasted, I bow to thee. Forgive me the touch of my feet.' It is this Mother Earth to the service and devotion of which we are dedicating ourselves today. The mother who gave us birth was bound to die some day, not so the Universal Mother who bears and sustains us. She must die some day, but when She passes away, She would take all her children along with her. She, therefore, demands a lifelong dedication . . ."

After a short visit to Rajkot, he went to Nadiad and other places. On November 2 he reached Ahmedabad to preside over Gujarat Literary Conference. Giving an impromptu address, he spoke on the business of a literary conference. He seemed to be wondering if he was there in his proper place. Did the few hundreds on the platform and the few thousands in front of him, who had gathered there to spend a couple of days in "lotus-eating", have any thought of the half-starved millions, who, if they were there, could mock at the deliberations of the conference? Did they have any thought of these dumb millions' appetites and aspirations, whatever they were? And so he gradually carried their thoughts to far-off Segaon, at the mention of whose illiterate and half-starved folk he visibly broke down.

"For whose sake are we going to have our literature?" he asked. "Not certainly for the great gentry of Ahmedabad. They can afford to engage literary men and have great libraries in their homes. But what about the poor man at the well who with unspeakable abuse is goading his bullocks to pull the big leather bucket? Years ago I had asked Narasinharao, who I am sorry is too aged and ill to be here in our midst, if he could give me something, some inspired tunes or ditties, which this man at the well could lustily sing and forget for ever the filthy abuse? That man belonged to Kochrab, where we had the beginnings of Satyagraha Ashram. But Kochrab is no village, it is a slum of Ahmedabad. Now, I have hundreds of such folk for whom I want real life-giving literature. How am I to do so? I live in Segaon today where in a population of six hundred a little over ten are literate, surely not more than fifty, very likely less. Of the ten or more who can read, there are hardly three or four who can understand what they read, and among the women there is not one who is literate. Seventy-five per cent of the population are Harijans. Now I thought of getting up a little library for them. Books had to be, of course, within their understanding, and so I begged a dozen school books from two or three girls who had no use for them. I have with me a young man who is an LL.B., but who has forgotten all his law and cast in his lot with me. He goes to the village and reads to those who come to him from these books, whatever they can follow and digest. He takes a newspaper or two with him. But how is he to make them follow our newspapers? What do they know of Spain and of Russia? What do they know of geography? What am I to read to them? Munshi's novels or *Krishna Charitra* which Krishnalal Jhaveri has translated from Bengali? It is a good book, but I am afraid, I cannot place it before those illiterate folk. They would take time to understand it.

"You must know that much as I should have loved to bring with me a Segaon boy here, I have not done so. What would he do here? He would find himself in a strange world. But I am here as his representative, as those village folk's representative. That is true democracy. I shall one day ask you to go with me there. I am clearing the way for you. Of course, the road is strewn with thorns, but I shall see that the thorns will be not without roses too.

"As I am speaking to you just now, I think of Dean Farrar and his book on the life of Christ. I may fight the British rule, but I do not

hate the English or their language. In fact, I appreciate their literary treasures. And Dean Farrar's book is one of the rare treasures of the English language. You know how he laboured to produce that book? He read everything about Jesus in the English language, and then he went to Palestine, saw every place and spot in the Bible that he could identify, and then wrote the book in faith and prayer, for the masses in England, in a language which all of them could understand. It is not in Dr. Johnson's style but in the easy style of Dickens. Have we men like Farrar, who will produce great literature for the village folk? Our literary men will pour on Kalidas and Bhavabhuti, and English authors, and will give us imitations. I want them to go to villages, study them, and give something life-giving."

Next he referred to the art exhibition that he had seen the same morning: "Though I was happy and proud to see what I saw in the exhibition this morning, and felt that I had not seen anything of the kind before in Gujarat, let me tell you that I missed what I would call a speaking painting. Why should I need an artist to explain a work of art to me? Why should it not speak out to me itself? I tell you what I mean. I saw in the Vatican art collection a statue of Christ on the Cross, which simply captured me and kept me spell-bound. I saw it five years ago, but it is still before me. There was no one there to explain its charm to me. In Belur in Mysore, I saw in the ancient temple a bracket in stone made of a little statuette, which spoke out to me without anyone to help me to understand it. It was just a woman, half-naked, struggling with folds of her clothes to extricate herself from the shafts of Cupid, who is after all lying defeated at her feet in the shape of a scorpion. I could see the agony on the form, the agony of the stings of the scorpion.

"I could speak on to you for hours telling you what I want. I want art and literature that can speak to the millions. I have given you an outline of the picture, you will fill in the details. I have said my say. My heart is weeping at the present moment, but time has made it hard enough not to break, even when there are occasions for it. As I think of Segaon and its skeletons (at this stage he broke down; after a little pause he continued), as I think of Segaon and its folk, I can't help saying that our literature is a miserable affair. Principal Dhruva sent me a list of a hundred books, but none of them would do for them. What am I to place before them? And their women! Is there any relation, I wonder, between them and the Ahmedabad ladies

I see in front of me? The Segaon women know no literature. They cannot even repeat Ramdhun with me. They simply know how to drudge and slave away. Reckless of sun or rain, of snakes or scorpions, they fetch water, they cut grass and hew wood, and look upon me as their benefactor if I give them work and few coppers. What am I to take to these dumb sisters? Those dumb millions do not live in Ahmedabad, but in the Indian villages. I know what to take to them. But I cannot tell you. I am no speaker, neither is the pen my profession. I have written what I have, because I could not help it, and at one time I was dumb, so much so that my friends used to call me a dunce, until I went to the courts where too it was with difficulty that I opened my lips. It is not my business to speak or to write. My business is to live among them and show them how to live. The key to swaraj is not in cities but in villages, and so I have settled in a village—a village, not of my seeking, but which came to me."

On the closing day of the conference, Gandhi developed the idea he had adumbrated on the first day. He referred to the "shilling-shockers" in the West, and to the torrent of fiction that was being issued from day to day, and said: "Let me tell you, Gujarati will be none the poorer without novels or literature, which is popularly and rightly called fiction. The less we revel in the realm of fiction, the better for us. When I went to South Africa forty years ago, I had armed myself with a few books, one of which was Taylor's *Gujarati Grammar*. The book, I remember, captivated me, but I have never had the opportunity of reading it again, I had it taken out of the library on the day I presided, but could read nothing in it except a few remarks of the epilogue that he has written to that book. Some words of his in that epilogue gripped me. 'Who said that Gujarati is a poor or an inadequate language?' asks Mr. Taylor passionately. 'Gujarati, the daughter of Sanskrit, how can it be poor? How can it be inadequate?' As is the speaker, so is his language. It is not its inherent poverty, but the poverty of the people speaking it that is reflected in Gujarati. That poverty cannot be wiped out by a few novels. How will it profit us, if, to take a simple instance, we had a number of *Nanda Batrisis* in our language? No, I must hark back again to the village, and tell you what I need. That, for instance, astronomy of which my ignorance was abysmal. In Yeravda jail, I saw Kakasaheb gazing at the stars every night, and he infected me with his passion. I sent for books and even for a telescope. Books in

English there were numerous, but Gujarati books there were none. There was a little book that had been sent me, but it was a miserable affair. Why should we not be able to give our people, our village folk, good books on astronomy? But have we for them even tolerable books on geography? I know of none. The fact is that we have neglected the village folk, and though we depend on them entirely for our food, we have behaved all through as though we were their patrons and they were our wards. We have never thought of their needs. Our country presents in the world the solitary pitiable phenomenon of a nation carrying on its affairs through the medium of a foreign tongue. No wonder, that our poverty of spirit is reflected in our language. There is no good book in French or German but is translated into English within a short time of its publication. Even its classics are made available to the average reader, even to the children, in convenient abridged sizes and at the cheapest prices. Have we anything like it? The field is vast and unexplored, and I want our litterateurs and linguists to explore it. I want them to go to villages, feel the pulse of the people, examine their needs and supply what they want. We have a village workers' training school in Wardha. I asked the principal of the school to know the village crafts himself, if he ever aspired to write intelligently about them. Do not say that your intellects would lose their freshness in villages by being choked in their close atmosphere. I will say that it is not the close atmosphere, it is your close intellect with which you have gone there. If you go there with your eyes and ears and intellects open, they will be all the fresher for a live contact with the virgin village air."

He next dwelt on a topic on which he had spoken in the Subjects Committee, but could not have any resolution thereon as he did not find the proper atmosphere. The occasion was a letter addressed to him by a women's organization called Jyoti Sangh. The letter enclosed a copy of the resolution that they had passed condemning the present-day tendency in literature with regard to the presentation of women. There was, he felt, considerable force in the complaint, and he said: "The gravamen of their charge is that the present-day writers give an entirely false picture of women. They are exasperated at the sickly sentimentality with which you delineate them, at the vulgar way in which you dwell on their physical form. Does all their beauty and their strength lie in their physical form, in their capacity to please the lustful eye of men? Why, the writers of the letter justly

ask, should they be eternally represented as meek submissive women for whom all the menial jobs of household are reserved, and whose only deities are their husbands? Why are they not delineated as they really are? They are as much human beings as men are, and they are filled with the same urge for freedom. I claim to know them and their minds well. There was a time in South Africa, when I was surrounded by numerous women, all their menfolk having gone to jails. There were sixty inmates, and I had became the brother and father of all the girls and women. They grew in strength and spirit under me, so that they ultimately marched to jails themselves.

"I am told that our literature is full of exaggerated apotheosis of women. Let me say that it is an altogether wrong apotheosis. Let me place one simple test before you. In what light do you think of them when you proceed to write about them? I suggest that before you put your pens to paper, think of woman as your mother, and I assure you the chastest literature will flow from your pens even like the beautiful rain from heaven which waters the thirsty earth below. Remember that a woman was your mother before a woman became your wife. Far from quenching their spiritual thirst some writers stimulate their passions, so much so the poor ignorant women waste their time wondering how they might answer to the description our fiction gives of them. Are the detailed descriptions of their physical form an essential part of literature? Do you find anything of the kind in the Upanishads or the Koran or the Bible? And yet do you know that the English language would be empty without the Bible? Three parts Bible and one part Shakespeare is the description of it. Arabic would be forgotten without the Koran. And think of Hindi without Tulsidas! Do you find in it anything like what you find in present-day literature about women?"

On the eve of his departure he had an occasion to meet Harijan workers at Sabarmati. "The work of removing untouchability," they said, "seems to be insuperable. How exactly are we to tackle it?" Gandhi replied, "Silent plodding."

Constructive Revolution

1936

In November Gandhi reached Segaon. Andrews, who had just returned from abroad, wanted to know from Gandhi his reaction to the attitude of the Christian missions in India. "Their behaviour," said Gandhi, "has been as bad as the rest who are in the field to add to their numbers. What pains one is their frantic attempt to exploit the weakness of Harijans. If they said, 'Hinduism is a diabolical religion and you come to us,' I should understand. But they dangle earthly paradise in front of them and make promises to them which they can never keep. When in Bangalore a deputation of Indian Christians came to me with a number of resolutions which they thought would please me, I said to them: This is no matter for bargain. You must say definitely that this is a matter to be settled by the Hindus themselves. Where is the sense of talking of a sudden awakening of spiritual hunger among the untouchables and then trying to exploit a particular situation? The poor Harijans have no mind, no intelligence, no sense of difference between God and no God. It is absurd for a single individual to talk of taking all Harijans with himself. Are they all bricks that they could be moved from one structure to another? If the Christian missions here want to play the game, and for that matter the Musalmans and others, they should have no such idea as that of adding to their ranks, whilst a great reform in Hinduism is going on."

Andrews: "Let me ask one question. I said in Australia that all the talk of Dr. Ambedkar and his followers was not in terms of religion, and that it was cruelty to bargain with unsophisticated people like Harijans as they are in most parts of India. Then came the London Missionary Society's statement that the Ezhavas in Travancore had asked for Christian instruction. I said then that the Ezhavas were quite enlightened and if they had really asked to be instructed in Christianity it would be an entirely different matter. Was I right?"

Gandhi: "I do not think so. Whilst there are individual Ezhavas who are doctors and barristers and so on, the vast majority of them are just the same as the Harijans elsewhere. I can assure you that no one representing the vast body of the Ezhavas could have asked for Christian instruction."

Andrews: "I see what you mean. Only I wanted to say that the London Missionary Society was a liberal body and would not make an irresponsible statement."

Gandhi: "But they at the centre cannot know, as the Parliament cannot know, the truth of what is happening in India."

Andrews: "But that apart, I should like to discuss the fundamental position with you. What would you say to a man, who after considerable thought and prayer, said that he could not have his peace and salvation except by becoming a Christian?"

Gandhi: "I would say that if a non-Christian, say a Hindu, came to a Christian and made that statement, he should ask him to become a good Hindu rather than find goodness in change of faith."

Andrews: "I cannot in this go the whole length with you, though you know my own position. I discarded the position that there is no salvation except through Christ long ago. But supposing the Oxford Group Movement people changed the life of your son, and he felt like being converted, what would you say?"

Gandhi: "I would say that the Oxford Group may change the lives of as many as they like but not their religion. They can draw their attention to the best in their respective religions and change their lives by asking them to live according to them. There came to me a man, son of Brahmin parents, who said his reading of your book had led him to embrace Christianity. I asked him if he thought the religion of his forefathers was wrong. He said, 'No'. Then I said, 'Is there any difficulty about your accepting the Bible as one of the great religious books of the world and Christ as one of the great teachers?' I said to him that you had never through your books asked Indians to take up the Bible and embrace Christianity, and that he had misread your book—unless of course your position is like that of the late Maulana Mahomed Ali's, namely, that a believing Musalman, however bad his life, is better than a good Hindu."

Andrews: "I don't accept Maulana Mahomed Ali's position at all. But I do say that if a person really needs a change of faith, I should not stand in his way."

Gandhi: "But don't you see that you do not even give him any chance? You do not even cross-examine him. Supposing a Christian came to me and said he was captivated by reading of *Bhagavat* and so wanted to declare himself a Hindu, I should say to him, 'No. What *Bhagavat* offers, the Bible also offers. You have not made the attempt to find it out. Make the attempt and be a good Christian.'"

Andrews: "I don't know. If some one earnestly says that he will become a good Christian, I should say, 'You may become one', though you know that I have in my own life strongly dissuaded ardent enthusiasts who approached me. I said to them, 'Certainly not on my account will you do anything of the kind.' But human nature does require a concrete faith."

Gandhi: "If a person wants to believe in the Bible let him say so, but why should he disregard his own religion? This proselytization will mean no peace in the world. Religion is a very personal matter. We should by living the life according to our own lights share the best with one another, thus adding to the sum-total of human effort to reach God."

"Consider," continued Gandhi, "whether you are going to accept the position of mutual toleration or of equality of all religions. My position is that all the great religions are fundamentally equal. We must have the innate respect for other religions as we have for our own. Mind you, not mutual toleration, but equal respect."

Dr. John Mott, an evangelist, followed Andrews. "You have been one," he addressed Gandhi, "that has given a great initiative to the movement, you have put your life-blood into it, you have suffered and triumphed, and I want you to help me to a profound understanding of what the issues are and tell me how I may help, for I do not want to hinder."

Gandhi: "So far as I am concerned with the untouchability question, it is one of life and death for Hinduism. I have said repeatedly, if untouchability lives Hinduism perishes, and even India perishes; but if untouchability is eradicated from the Hindu heart root and branch, then Hinduism has a definite message for the world. I have said the first thing to hundreds of audiences, but not the latter part. Now that is the utterance of a man who accepts Truth as God. It is, therefore, no exaggeration. If untouchability is an integral part of Hinduism, the latter is a spent bullet. But untouchability is a hideous untruth. My motive in launching the anti-untouchability campaign

is clear. What I am aiming at is not every Hindu touching an 'untouchable', but every touchable Hindu driving untouchability from his heart, going through a complete change of heart. Inter-dining or intermarrying is not the point, I may not dine with you, but I ought not to harbour the feeling that if I dined with you, I should be polluted. If I was a woman to be married, I should not say, 'I cannot marry a man because he is an untouchable.' I am making this clear to you, because in the programme of Harijan Sevak Sangh we say we don't ask the orthodox Hindus to inter-dine or intermarry with the 'untouchables'. Many of us have no scruples about inter-dining or intermarriage. That untouchability is an ancient custom I admit, but there are many such things intertwined with Hinduism, because it is an ancient religion, even a prehistoric religion. Instead of being the dead faith that it threatens to be, I want it to be a living faith, so that it may exist side by side with other religions of the world."

The conversation led to the genesis of the Yeravda pact, beginning with Gandhi's declaration at the Round Table Conference, to lay his life down to stop the vivisection of Hinduism. "But," said Gandhi, "I had no political axe to grind, I have none. Nor have the other Hindus a political motive. For instance, the pact has been a kind of bombshell thrown in the midst of the Bengalis. They have their own Hindu-Muslim problem, which has been rendered difficult by the Yeravda pact. The original Premier's award, as it was called, gave fewer seats to Harijans than the pact gives. It is almost overwhelming number. But I said Hinduism loses nothing, if all the seats were captured by Harijans. I would not alter a comma in the pact, unless Harijans themselves wanted it."

Dr. Mott: "Removal of untouchability is the business of your lifetime. The importance of this movement lies beyond the frontiers of India, and yet there are few subjects on which there is more confusion of thought. Take for instance the missionaries and missionary societies. They are not of one mind. It is highly desirable that we become of one mind and find out how far we can help and not hinder. I am chairman of the International Missionary Council which combines 300 missionary societies in the world. I have on my desk reports of these societies, and can say that their interest in the untouchables is deepening. I should be interested if you would feel free to tell me where, if anywhere, the missionaries have gone along the wrong lines. Their desire is to help and not to hinder."

Gandhi: "I can't help saying that the activities of missionaries in this connection have hurt me. They along with the Muslims and the Sikhs came forward as soon as Dr. Ambedkar threw the bombshell, and they gave it an importance out of all proportion to the weight it carried, and then ensued a rivalry between these organizations. I could understand the Muslim organizations doing this as Hindus and Muslims have been quarrelling. The Sikh intervention is an enigma. But the Christian mission claims to be a purely spiritual effort. It hurt me to find Christian bodies vying with Muslims and Sikhs in trying to add to the numbers of their fold. I should have understood and appreciated your prayers for Harijans, but instead, you made an appeal to those who had not even the mind and intelligence to understand what you talked; they have not the intelligence to distinguish between Jesus and Mahomed and Nanak, and so on."

Dr. Mott referred to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the discussion he had with him, and other bishops and missionary leaders in England, and emphasized the fact that the Christians should in no way seem to be bidding with others for the souls of Indian people. He said he had an assurance from the free as well as the state church leaders, but in secular papers it had got abroad that Dr. Ambedkar could hand over fifty million people to those, who were prepared to accept them. He had sensed that it might mean a tremendous disservice. "The most trustworthy leaders of the Protestant missionary forces," said Dr. Mott, "would give what you have said great heed. They do believe increasingly in work for the untouchables. Tell us what we can wisely do and what we cannot wisely do."

Gandhi: "So far as this desire of Dr. Ambedkar is concerned, you can look at the whole movement with utter calmness and indifference. If there is any answer to Dr. Ambedkar's appeal, and if Harijans and he take the final step and come to you, you can take such steps as your conscience suggests. But today it seems unseemly and precipitates to anticipate what Dr. Ambedkar and Harijans are going to do."

Dr. Mott: "But there is a deplorable confusion of thought and divided counsel even amongst friends. The Devil would like nothing better. My life has been mostly spent for the intellectual classes, and I feel very much conscience-moved to help in this movement."

Gandhi cited the example of good Christians helping by working under the Hindu banner. There was Mr. Kaithan who was trying

hard to smooth the path of the untouchables. There were Miss Barr and Miss Madden, who had thrown themselves into the rural reconstruction movement. He then adverted to the problem in Travancore where an indecent competition was going on for enticing away the Ezhavas from the Hindu fold. "The Ezhavas want temple entry. But it is no use your asking me whether they want temple entry. Even if they do not want it, I must see that they enjoy the same right as I enjoy, and so the reformers there are straining every nerve to open the temple doors."

Dr. Mott: "But must we not serve them?"

Gandhi: "Of course, you will, but not make conversion the price of your service."

Dr. Mott: "I agree that we ought to serve them, whether they become Christians or not. Christ offered no inducements. He offered service and sacrifice."

Gandhi: "If Christians want to associate themselves with this reform movement, they should do so without any idea of conversion."

Dr. Mott: "Apart from this unseemly competition, should they not preach the Gospel with reference to its acceptance?"

Gandhi: "Would you preach the Gospel to a cow? Well some of the untouchables are worse than the cows in understanding. I mean they can no more distinguish between the relative merits of Islam and Hinduism and Christianity, than can a cow. You can only preach through your life. The rose does not say, 'Come and smell me.'"

Dr. Mott: "But Christ said, 'Preach and teach,' and also that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. There was a day when I was an unbeliever. Then J.E.K. Studd of Cambridge, a famous cricketer, visited my university on an evangelistic mission and cleared the air for me. His life and splendid example alone would not have answered my question and met my deepest need, but I listened to him and was converted. First and foremost we must live the life; but then by wise and sympathetic unfolding of essential truth we must shed light on processes and actions, so that it may lead us into the freedom which is freedom indeed. You do not want Christians to withdraw tomorrow?"

Gandhi: "No. But I do not want you to come in the way of our work, if you cannot help us."

Dr. Mott: "Christian religion is the religion of sharing our life; how can we share without supplementing our lives with words?"

Gandhi: "Then, what they are doing in Travancore is correct? There may be a difference of degree in what you say and what they are doing, but there is no difference of quality. If you must share it with Harijans, why don't you share it with me, Thakkar Bapa and Mahadev? Why should you go to the untouchables and try to exploit this upheaval? Why not come to us instead?"

Dr. Mott: "The whole current discussion since the Ambedkar declaration has become badly mixed with other unworthy motives, which must be eliminated. Jesus said, 'Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.' A good Christian has to testify what he has experienced in his life or as a result of his own observation. We are not true as His followers, if we are not true witnesses of Christ. He said, 'Go and teach and help through the mists and lead them out into larger light.' "

Andrews here intervened and remarked: "There are fundamental differences between you and the missionaries, and yet you are the friend of the missionaries. But you feel that they are not playing the game. You want the leaders of the Church to say, 'We do not want to fish in troubled waters; we shall do nothing to imply that we are taking advantage of a peculiar situation that had arisen.' "

Gandhi: "I do not think it is a matter which admits of any compromise at all. It is a deeply religious problem and each should do what he likes. If your conscience tells you that the present effort is your mission, you need not give any quarter to Hindu reformers. I can simply state my belief that what the missionaries are doing today does not show spirituality."

The next day's interview covered a variety of subjects.

Dr. Mott: "What are the governing ideals and aims of this village industries movement? What is the object of your settling down in the little village?"

Gandhi: "The immediate object of my stay in Segaon is to remove to the best of my ability the appalling ignorance, poverty and the still more appalling insanitation of the Indian villages. We seek to remove ignorance not through imparting the knowledge of the alphabet by word of mouth, but by giving them object-lessons in sanitation, by telling them what is happening in the world, and soon."

Dr. Mott: "What is the cause of your greatest concern, heaviest burden?"

Gandhi: "My greatest worry is the ignorance and poverty of the masses of India, and the way in which they have been neglected by

the classes, especially the neglect of the Harijans by the Hindus. We are custodians of a great religion and yet have been guilty of a crime which constitutes our greatest shame. Had I not been a believer in the inscrutable ways of Providence, a sensitive man like me would have been a raving maniac."

Dr. Mott: "What affords you the greatest hope and satisfaction?"

Gandhi: "Faith in myself born of faith in God."

Dr. Mott: "In moments when your heart may sink within you, you hark back to this faith in God?"

Gandhi: "Yes. That is why I have always described myself as an irrepressible optimist."

Dr. Mott: "So am I. Our difficulties are our salvation. They make us hark back to the living God."

Gandhi: "Yes. Difficulties have strengthened my faith which rises superior to every difficulty, and remains undimmed. My darkest hour was when I was in Bombay, a few months ago. It was the hour of my temptation. Whilst I was asleep, I suddenly felt as though I wanted to see a woman. A man who had tried to rise superior to the sex instinct for nearly forty years was bound to be intensely pained when he had this frightful experience. I ultimately conquered the feeling, but I was face to face with the blackest moment of my life and if I had succumbed to it, it would have meant my absolute undoing. I was stirred to the depths, because strength and peace come from a life of continence. Many Christian friends are jealous of the peace I possess. It comes from God, who had blessed me with the strength to battle against temptation."

The talk was now coming to an end. "The greatest thing you have ever done is the observance of your Monday silence. You illustrate thereby the storing up and releasing of power when needed. What place has it continued to have in the preparation of your spiritual tasks?" asked Dr. Mott.

"It is not the greatest thing I have done, but it certainly means a great thing to me," replied Gandhi. "I am now taking silence almost every day. If I could impose on myself silence for more days in the week than one, I should love it. In Yeravda jail I once observed a fifteen days' silence. I was in the seventh heaven during that period. But this silence is now being utilized to get through arrears of work. It is a superficial advantage after all. The real silence should not be interrupted by writing notes to others and carrying on conversation

through them. The notes interrupt the sacredness of the silence when you should listen to the music of the spheres. That is why, I often say that my silence is fraud."

In the midst of these talks came the news of a great reform from the south. By a proclamation, the Travancore ruler threw open all state temples to Harijans. "The modern miracle in Travancore," Gandhi exclaimed, "is due to the influence of women, or if you please, to the influence of one woman, Her Highness the Maharani of Travancore. When I was in Travancore some years ago, I met the maharani. She was determined to do what was the purest act of justice, and it is she who is at the back of the maharaja's decision. It was a courageous act to issue the proclamation and still more courageous to carry it out to the letter. The maharaja could not have done it without the support of his mother. So I see the hand of woman in this miracle."

The opening of temples would not have been possible without the widest co-operation of the Caste Hindus. "It is a unique demonstration of the power of non-violence," he said. "I had thought that the state would at least have to post a strong police force at the main temples and that at least a few heads would be broken. The process began with the biggest state temple, the one that the maharaja visits himself. There was no political pressure here. It could not be imposed upon a million people. I had no idea that there were nearly 2,000 temples in Travancore. I only knew that ten years ago our volunteers had been severely hammered for even crossing a forbidden road near the temple at Vaikom. Now the humblest of the humble have entered the Vaikom temple without the slightest difficulty. The proclamation did not enthuse me, though it was a solid thing. For I had feared that there might be a political motive behind it. But all my fears have been dispelled. That the orthodoxy, who used to swear by the letter of the ritual, and made so much of the efficacy of temple worship being destroyed by even the shadow of a pariah, would fall in with the proclamation, is a thing I was not prepared for, so soon at any rate. But God has made possible what man could not have done."

But he warned his followers that it was not the end of untouchability. He wanted the Caste Hindus to understand the problem and work with redoubled vigour. In a significant article entitled "The Ideal Bhangi", he wrote:

"The ideal bhangi of my conception would be a Brahmin *par excellence,* possibly even excel him. It is possible to envisage the existence of a bhangi without a Brahmin. But without the former the latter could not be. It is the bhangi who enables society to live. A bhangi does for society, what a mother does for her baby. A mother washes her baby of dirt and insures his health. Even so the bhangi protects and safeguards the health of the entire community by maintaining sanitation for it. The Brahmin's duty is to look after the sanitation of the soul, the bhangi's that of the body of society. But there is a difference in practice ; the Brahmin generally does not live up to his duty, the bhangi does willynilly no doubt. Society is sustained by several services. The bhangi constitutes the foundation of all services.

"Yet our woebegone Indian society has branded the bhangi as a social pariah, set him down at the bottom of the scale, held him fit only to receive kicks and abuse, a creature who must subsist on the leavings of the caste people and dwell on the dung-heap. He is without a friend, his very name has become the term of reproach. This is shocking. It is perhaps useless to seek the why and wherefore of it. I certainly am unaware of the origin of the inhuman conduct, but I know this much that by looking down upon the bhangi, we—Hindus, Musalmans, Christians and all—have deserved the contempt of the whole world. Our villages have today become seats of dirt and insanitation and the villagers come to an early and untimely death. If only we had given due recognition to the status of the bhangi, as equal to that of a Brahmin, as in fact and justice he deserves, our villages today, no less than their inhabitant, would have looked a picture of cleanliness and order. We would have to a large extent been free from the ravages of a host of diseases which directly spring from our uncleanliness and lack of sanitary habits.

"I, therefore, make bold to state without any manner of hesitation or doubt, that not till the invidious distinction between the Brahmin and the bhangi is removed, will our society enjoy health, prosperity and peace, and be happy.

"What qualities should such an honoured servant of the society exemplify in his person? In my opinion, an ideal bhangi should have a thorough knowledge of the principles of sanitation. He should know how a right kind of latrine is constructed, and the correct way of cleaning it. He should know how to overcome and destroy the odour of excreta and various disinfectants to render them innocuous. He

should likewise know the process of converting night-soil and urine into manure.

"But that is not all. My ideal bhangi would know the quality of night-soil and urine. He would keep a close watch on these and give a timely warning to the individual concerned. Thus, he will give a timely notice of the results of his examination of the excreta. That presupposes a scientific knowledge of the requirements of his profession. He would likewise be an authority on the subject of disposal of night-soil in small villages as well as in big cities, and his advice and guidance in the matter would be sought for and freely given to society. It goes without saying that he would have the usual learning necessary for reaching the standard here laid down for his profession. Such an ideal bhangi, while deriving his livelihood from his occupation, would approach it only as a sacred duty. In other words, he would not dream of amassing wealth out of it. He would consider himself responsible for the proper removal and the disposal of all the dirt and night-soil within the area which he serves, and regard the maintenance of healthy and sanitary condition within the same as the *summum bonum* of his existence.

"How may we have this ideal bhangi? Only when we have produced an army of Appa Patwardhans. To clothe the bhangi with the dignity and respect due to him is the especial task and privilege of the educated class. Some members of the class would first themselves master the science of sanitation to educate the bhangis round them in the same. They would carefully study their present condition and the causes underlying it and set themselves to the task of eradicating the same by dint of inexhaustible perseverance and patience that never looks back and knows no defeat. They would teach them the laws of cleanliness. Our bhangis do not today possess even good brooms or other suitable means for the removal of night-soil. The latrines themselves are wretched. The site round the bhangis' quarters is no better than a cesspool of dirt. All this can only go, if some of the educated class give themselves up to the task of redeeming the bhangi from his present plight, and thus redeeming society from its terrible insanitation. Surely this is work enough to satisfy the highest ambition of one who has the spirit of service in him."

Addressing the students of the Village Workers' Training School, Gandhi asked them to study the article on the "Ideal Bhangi". He regaled them with stories of the bhangi who was serving the village,

and who was now being asked to go for negligent work, and of the new bhangi who asked for Rs. 30 a month, and who ultimately was ready to accept Rs. 15. "Now it is your work to mend these people's ways, and you cannot do so unless you are good bhangis yourselves. As I have explained in my article, I do not want the bhangi to be the indifferent and perfunctory scavenger that he is today. I want him to be a healer of ailments and a physician, besides being an ideal scavenger. In ancient times the village barber used to be the village surgeon. I want the good bhangi to be the village health inspector and physician. You have to pave the way for this. Today we have reduced him to the lowest level and we have gone down with him. He is content to live in squalor and dirt, we are doing no better. You cannot reform him unless you reform yourselves, unless you set about that task with a passion that you momentarily put into your studies. The task of rural sanitation is no easy one, it means nothing less than raising the village bhangi to the status of an ideal bhangi. The whole subject is unexplored; the profession, far from being a dirty one, is a purifying, life-protecting one. Only we have debased it. We have to raise it to its true status."

It was Mr. Basil Mathews who, when he visited Gandhi, used the word "constructive revolution" and wanted to know from him the whole perspective of rural development work. "I cannot speak with either the definiteness or the confidence of a Stalin or a Hitler," said Gandhi, "as I have no cut and dried programme which I can impose on the villagers. My method, I need not say, is different. I propose to convert by patient persuasion. This is a kind of practical adult education to be put to use as it progresses. The centre is automatically shifted from the cities to villages. They will be taught to know what they should want and how to obtain it in the shape of sanitation and hygiene, improvement of material conditions and social relations. If this primary education is taken by them in its fullness everything else follow. But in indicating the ideal, I have told you of the difficulties of this stupendous task. For, you should know that we have smaller, more illiterate villages even than Segaon, where people hug their ignorance and dirt, as they do their untouchability."

Mr. Mathews then discussed the place of the money-lender and the zamindar in the village economy. "The money-lender who today is inevitable," replied Gandhi, "will gradually eliminate himself. Nor are co-operative banks needed, because when I have taught Harijans

the art I want to teach them, they will not need much ready money. Besides, those who are today deep down in mire cannot make use of co-operative banks. I am not so much concerned in getting them loans of money or plots of land, as I am about getting them bread and butter and even a little cheese. When people have learnt the art of turning idle hours to wealth, all the adjustment will follow."

"But what about the zamindar? Would you eliminate him?"

"I do not want to destroy the zamindar, but neither I do feel the zamindar is inevitable. I will illustrate how I work out my trusteeship theory here. In this village Jamnalal has a seventy-five per cent share. Of course, I have come here not by design, but by accident. When I approached Jamnalal for help, he built me the required hut and the outhouses and said, 'Whatever profit there is from Segaon you may take for the welfare of the village.' If I can persuade other zamindars to do likewise, village improvement becomes easy. Of course, the next question is that of the land system and that of the Government exploitation. I regard the difficulties surrounding that aspect of the question as, for the moment, necessary evils. If the present programme is carried through, I shall perhaps know how to deal with the Government exploitation."

"Your actual economic policy would differ from Mr. Nehru's? He, so far as I understand him, would wipe out the zamindar."

"Yes," replied Gandhi, "we seem to differ in our ideas of village uplift and reconstruction. The difference is of emphasis. He does not mind the village movement. He believes in industrialization; I have grave doubt about its usefulness for India."

Faizpur Congress

1936

As THE year 1936 was coming to a close, there was a stir about the election of the Congress President. Nehru stated : "I shall gladly welcome the election of any of my colleagues and co-operate with him in another capacity in the great enterprise we have undertaken. Should the choice of my countrymen fall on me, I dare not say 'no' to it. I shall submit to their pleasure. But before they so decide they must fully realize what I stand for, what thoughts move me, and what the springs of action are for me. In speech and writing I have given enough indication of this and from this I want to be judged."

Vallabhbhai Patel, in withdrawing from the election, said: "My withdrawal should not be taken to mean that I endorse all the views Jawaharlal stands for. Indeed, Congressmen know that on some vital matters my views are in conflict with those held by Jawaharlal. For instance, I don't believe that it is impossible to purge capitalism of its hideousness. While the Congress holds to non-violence and truth as indispensable means for the attainment of independence, Congressmen to be logical and true to their profession, must believe in the possibility of weaning those who are mercilessly exploiting the masses from what is a crime against the humanity. The question of 'holding office' is not a live issue today. But I can visualize the occasion when acceptance of office may be desirable to achieve the common purpose. There may then be a sharp division of opinion between Jawaharlal and myself, or rather among Congressmen. We know him to be too loyal to the Congress to disregard the decision of the majority, assuming that the latter lays down a policy repugnant to him. The president has no dictatorial powers. He is the chairman of our well-built organization. The Congress does not part with its powers by electing any individual, no matter who he is. I ask the delegates to plump for Jawaharlal as being the best person to represent the nation and guide in right channel the different forces that are at work in country."

Gandhi was bent upon making the village session of the Congress a success. In an article "India in a Village", he wrote: "I tender my congratulations to the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee on their decision to hold the Congress session at Faizpur, a village in East Khandesh. The committee must not aim at reproducing a city in the village. That would be doing violence to the whole conception. They should aim at giving the city people who, let us hope, will gather in their thousands, such hospitality as a model village should be able to supply. In other words, we should see in December, a miniature edition of village India in Faizpur. By wise planning the organizers will find that there is practically nothing that a model village cannot supply in the way of hygienic comforts, proper food, proper sanitation, and in case of sickness, proper medical aid. But everything in a village has to conform to the village scale which need never be shoddy and be, at the same time, subdued. For lighting, I would suggest electric light, though it may be a long time before our villages are able to have electricity. The whole show should be an object-lesson both for villagers and townsfolk. The chief attraction of the Congress will necessarily be the exhibition. In order that it may become a success, artists, engineers and like professional men will have to volunteer their services and they will have to approach what to me is a sacred task with the village mentality."

In a letter to Nandalal Bose, who was responsible for the Congress exhibition at Lucknow, he wrote: "The heart, having got a little, hankers for all." At first Nandalal was reluctant to shoulder the responsibility. "I am merely a painter," he replied, "and I know little of architecture, and, therefore, am not competent." Gandhi wrote back, "I do not want an expert pianist but a sincere and devoted fiddler." When Gandhi came to Segaon his oral instructions were: "I want to tell you about a unique feature of the Faizpur Congress which is a novel idea of mine. This Congress will be for villagers and not for townsfolk. Its setting should be made by village artisans out of materials commonly obtainable in the village." As for the expenses on the exhibition, Gandhi put the limit at Rs. 5,000.

A few days before the opening of the Congress, Gandhi inspected the work and he was pleased to find that the decorations and architecture were admirably suited to a village Congress. "In the result, the Congress camp named Tilak Nagar," observed one Anglo-Indian journal, "is a bamboo city. The walls and roofs of tents are made of

bamboo. The decorations on archways consist of coloured bamboo splints, arranged vertically, horizontally and diagonally, to give a floral effect. They are surmounted by upturned wicker baskets of varying sizes, one above the other like umbrellas, with the Congress tricolour flag flying aloft. Everything is crude in the extreme."

On December 25, Gandhi opened the Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition with a significant speech:

"You must have seen from the newspapers that the responsibility for having this session of the Congress in a village is wholly mine. They had announced that I would go to Faizpur in the beginning of December and supervise all arrangements about the exhibition. The latter half of the statement is true, and without false modesty or exaggeration I would say that I am wholly responsible for whatever shortcomings you see here. The idea of having the Congress and the exhibition in a village originated with me, and I must shoulder the responsibility for whatever defect or shortcomings you will notice here. The credit for anything good that you will see belongs to those who were in charge of the arrangements here. It was Dastane and Dev who accepted my suggestion to have the Congress and the exhibition in a village and with the thoroughness and determination that characterize the Maharashtrians they have carried out their promise. The exhibition was bound to be according to my conception because it is organized by the All-India Spinners' Association of which I am the president and the All-India Village Industries Association which I am guiding and directing. And I had to warn them against creating a Lucknow or Delhi, in a Maharashtra village. Why not in that case have the Congress and the exhibition both in Poona? But if they were to be in a village, they must be in keeping with an Indian village. And no one could do it better than I, because as I said to them I had long been a villager by choice, whereas they had become villagers only recently. Of course, I too settled in Segaon only a few months ago, and as I was actually born and bred and educated in a town, my body found it difficult to adjust itself automatically to the village life. I had, therefore, malaria there. But, as you know, I threw it off immediately, recovered quickly and am alive and kicking. Part of the reason, of course, is that I am now carefree, having cast all my cares on the broad shoulders of Jawaharlal and the Sardar. However, let me yield up the real secret of my health, which is, that my body happens to be where I had set my heart.

"Credit for the arrangements here belongs to the architect Shri Mhatre and the artist Shri Nandalal Bose. When Nanda Babu responded to my invitation a couple of months ago, I explained to him what I wanted and left it to him to give concrete shape to the conception. For, he is a creative artist and I am none. God has given me the sense of art but not the organs to give it a concrete shape. He has blessed Nanda Babu with both. I am thankful that he agreed to take upon himself the whole burden of organizing the artistic side of the exhibition and he came and settled down here some weeks ago to see to everything himself. The result is that the whole Tilak Nagar is an exhibition in itself, and so it begins not where I am going to open it but at the main gateway, which is a fine piece of village art. Please remember that Nanda Babu has depended entirely on local material and local labour to bring all the structures here into being.

"Now I want you to go and see the exhibition with, if possible, my eyes. If you will realize that it is organized under the auspices of the A.-I.S.A. and A.-I.V.I.A., you will know what to expect there. The object of the former is to make the whole of India khadi-clad, a goal which we are unfortunately still far from having reached. The object of the latter is to revive the moribund cottage industries of India. Both khadi and the other cottage industries are vital to the economic welfare of our village.

"This exhibition is no spectacular show, it is not intended either to dazzle the eyes of the public or to delude them. This is a genuine village exhibition which has been brought into being by the labour of villagers. It is a pure educative effort. It simply shows the villagers how to double their income, if only they will use their hands and feet and the resources around them. I would ask our president to take me to a village in U.P., and I would offer to reconstruct the village not out of Jamnalalji's money but with the help of the hands and feet of the men and women living there on condition that he induces the villagers to work according to instructions. Our president will perhaps say that as soon as these poor folk begin adding to their income a zamindar like Jamnalalji would enhance the rent and thus rob the extra income out of their hands. Well, we will not allow the zamindar to do anything of the kind. There is no doubt in my mind that in a country like ours teeming with millions of unemployed something is needed to keep their hands and feet engaged in order that they may earn an honest living. It is for them that khadi and cottage industries

are needed. It is clear to me as daylight that they are badly needed at the present moment. What the future has in store for them I do not know, nor do I care to know."

With this he proceeded to describe some of the exhibits that had been placed before him—small tools from the blacksmith's smithy which had been made overnight, articles made by Andhra workmen out of grass growing on the river banks, fox's hide cured and tanned and lined with khadi at the Wardha tannery, and so on. "These little things," he remarked, "add substantially to the income of the poor villagers. If you can ensure them three annas instead of the three pice that they get today, they will think they have won swaraj. That is what khadi is trying to do for the spinners today.

"In brief, we have to teach them how to turn waste into wealth, and that is what the exhibition is meant to teach them. When I met Nanda Babu two months ago I asked him not to bring from Santiniketan costly paintings from his own school of art, lest untimely rain should ruin them. He accepted my advice and has collected things from the neighbourhood of this place. He launched out to the villages with the eye of an artist that is his, and picked up numerous things from the peasants' households, things that never catch an ordinary eye as striking objects of art, but which his discerning eye picked up and arranged and thus clothed with a new meaning.

"Vaikunth Mehta has apologized for the small size of the exhibition as compared with the previous ones, but there was no occasion for an apology. It does not contain one superfluous exhibit, and the crafts represented mean so much additional production. Look at the samples of handmade paper made out of *munj* grass, banana bark and bamboo. Bamboo has played a prominent part in all the structures you see here, and you may be sure that after this Congress camp breaks up, all the bamboo will be turned to good account.

"You could not but have noticed the grand simplicity of the procession that was organized for our president, especially the beautifully designed and decorated chariot drawn by six pairs of bullocks. Well, all that was designed in order to prepare you for what awaited you here. No city amenities or comforts, but everything that the poor villagers could provide. The place is thus a place of pilgrimage for us all, our Kashi and our Mecca, where we have come in order to offer our prayers for freedom and to consecrate ourselves to the nation's service. You have not come here to lord it over the poor peasants but

to learn how to get off their backs by participating in their daily toil, by doing the scavenger's job, by washing for yourselves, by grinding your own flour, etc. For the first time in the history of the Congress you are being given here rice unpolished of its substance and *chapati* made out of hand-ground flour, plenty of fresh air, and clean mother earth to rest your limbs upon. But you will please bear with all the organizer's shortcomings, for, in Khan Saheb's language, we are all Khudai Khidmatgars—servants of God, come here not to take, but to tender service."

The setting in which the Congress met at Faizpur on December 27 was impressive. Some 100,000 people, from far and near, had arrived and were assembled inside the Tilak Nagar. President Nehru in his address dwelt upon "the triumphant course of fascism in Europe," introducing an open gangsterism in international affairs, and anticipated the war to which it would lead to, unless checked in time. The rape of Abyssinia and the tragedy of Spain were there as witnesses to it. The foreign policy of Britain was not altogether innocent. The futile avowal of non-intervention of the League powers helped to weaken the Spanish democratic government. British imperialism was only the handmaid of the fascist power. In the midst of this reaction, he said, "the Congress today stands for full democracy in India and fights for a democratic state, not for socialism. It is anti-imperialist and strives for great changes in our political and economic structure. I hope the logic of events will lead to socialism; for, that seems to me the only remedy for India's economic ills."

Then the president turned to India's problems—the new constitution, constituent assembly, the need to oppose the federal structure of the act and to write on a clean slate afresh. He then discussed at length the question of acceptance of office and reminded how in Lucknow he had ventured to tell the Congress that, in his opinion, acceptance of office was a negation of policy of rejection of the act and how since Lucknow the election manifesto further clarified the position that the Congressmen were going to the legislatures not to co-operate with the act but to combat it. He had no doubt that the only logical consequence of the Congress policy was to have nothing to do with the office and the ministry.

"The real object before us," Nehru continued, "is to build up a powerful joint front of all the anti-imperialistic forces in the country. The Congress has been indeed in the past, and is today such a united

popular front, and inevitably the Congress must be the basis and the pivot of united action. The active participation of the organized workers and peasants in such a front would add to its strength and must be welcomed. Co-operation between them and the Congress organizations has been growing and has been a marked feature of the past year. This tendency must be encouraged. The most urgent and vital need of India today is this united national front of all the forces and elements that are ranged against imperialism. Within the Congress itself most of the forces are represented, and in spite of their diversity and difference in outlook, they have co-operated and worked together for common good."

There was at Faizpur a difference of opinion over the question of office-acceptance and the majority favoured the postponement of the decision till after the elections were over. The election manifesto, already considered by the A.-I.C.C., was duly endorsed. The Congress attitude towards the new constitution and reasons for contesting the elections as given in the manifesto were as follows:

"This Congress reiterates its entire rejection of the Government of India Act of 1935 and the constitution that has been imposed on India against the declared will of the people of the country. In the opinion of the Congress, any co-operation with the constitution is a betrayal of India's struggle for freedom and a strengthening of the hold of British imperialism. The Congress, therefore, repeats its resolve not to submit to this constitution or to co-operate with it, but to combat it, inside and outside the legislatures, so as to end it. The Congress does not and will not recognize the right of any external power or authority to dictate the political and economic structure of India, and every such attempt will be met by the organized and uncompromising opposition of the Indian people. The Congress stands for genuine democratic state in India where political power has been transferred to the people as a whole and the Government is under their control. Such a state can only come in existence through a constituent assembly, elected by adult suffrage, and having the power to determine finally the constitution of the country."

Gandhi took no part in the Congress debates but his speech made on the exhibition grounds on December 27 was significant. "I am powerful as ever," he said, "and will prove it when time comes." His speech answered so many of the doubts, difficulties and objections raised regarding his constructive programme:

"I am going to say nothing new. The cult of the spinning wheel is eighteen years old. I said in 1918 that we could win swaraj through the spinning wheel. My faith in the ability of the spinning wheel is as bright today, as when I first declared it in 1918. It has become richer for the experience and experiment of all these years.

"But you should know the implications of the wheel or khadi, its product. It is not enough that one wears khadi on the ceremonial occasions or even wears it to the exclusion of all other cloth, if he surrounds himself with *videshi* in everything else. Khadi means the truest swadeshi spirit, identification with the starving millions.

"Let there be no mistake about my conception of swaraj. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So, at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is *dharma,* that is, religion in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., but is superior to them all. You may recognize it by the name of Truth, not the honesty of expedience but the living Truth, that pervades everything and will survive all destruction and all transformation. Moral and social uplift may be recognized by the term we are used to, that is, non-violence. Let us call this the square of swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue. In the language of the Congress we cannot achieve this political and economic freedom without truth and non-violence, in concrete terms without a living faith in God, and hence moral and social elevation.

"By political independence I do not mean a mere imitation of the British House of Commons, or the Soviet rule of Russia or the Fascist rule of Italy or the Nazi rule of Germany. They have systems suited to their genius. We must have ours suited to ours. What that can be is more than I can tell. I have described it as Ram Raj, that is, sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. The Congress constitutions of Nagpur and Bombay, for which I am mainly responsible, are an attempt to achieve this type of swaraj.

"Then take economic independence. It is not the product of industrialization of the modern or the western type. Indian economic independence means to me the economic uplift of every individual, male and female, by his or her own conscious effort. Under that system, all men and women will have enough clothing—not the mere loin-cloth, but what we understand by the term necessary articles of

clothing—and enough food, including milk and butter which are today denied to millions.

"This brings me to socialism. Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught: 'All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line and he can, therefore, unmake it.' Gopal literally means shepherd; it also means God. In modern language, it means the state, that is, the people. That the land today does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it.

"I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia, and that without violence. The most effective substitute for violent dispossession is the wheel with all its implications. Land and all property is his who will work it. Unfortunately, the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact.

"Let us see how India came to be utterly impoverished. History tells us that the East India Company ruined the cotton manufacture and by all kinds of means made her dependent upon Lancashire for her cloth, the next great necessity of man. It is still the largest item of import. It thus created a huge army of partially unemployed men and women counted in millions and gave them no other employment in return. With the destruction of hand-ginning, carding, spinning and weaving, to a certain extent, perished other industries of India's villages. Continuous unemployment has induced in the people a kind of laziness which is most depressing. Thus, whilst the alien rule is undoubtedly responsible for the growing pauperism of the people, we are more responsible for it. If the middle-class people, who betrayed their trust and bartered away the economic independence of India for a mess of pottage, would now realize their error and take the message of the wheel to the villagers and induce them to shed their laziness and work at the wheel, we can ameliorate the condition of the people to a great extent. It would be a terrible thing if laziness replaces industry and despair triumphs over hope.

"The parliamentary programme is in the air. It has come to stay and rightly. However, it cannot bring us independence. Its function is strictly limited, though quite necessary. Its success will prevent the Government from claiming that ordinance rule or any measure restricting our progress to the goal was sanctioned by popular representatives. Hence the necessity for voters voting for Congress candidates

who dare not vote for unpopular measures without being liable to Congress discipline. The success of that programme may bring some relief in individual cases, such as the release of Subhas Bose or the detenus. But that is not independence, political or economic.

"Look at it in another way. Only a limited number of men and women can become members of legislatures, say, 1,500. How many from this audience can become legislators? Just now no more than three and a half crores can vote for the 1,500 members. What about the remaining thirty-one and a half crores? In our conception of swaraj, they are the masters and the three and a half crores are the former's servants, who in their turn are masters of the 1,500. Thus the latter are doubly servants, if they will be true to their trust.

"But the thirty-one and a half crores have also a trust to discharge towards themselves and the nation of which they as individuals are but tiny parts. And if they remain lazy, know nothing of swaraj and how to win it, they will themselves become slaves of the 1,500 legislators. For my argument, the three and a half crores of voters here belong to the same category as the thirty-one and a half crores. For if they do not become industrious and wise, they will be so many pawns in the hands of 1,500 players, it is of little consequence whether they are Congressmen or otherwise. If the voters wake up only to register their votes every three years or more and then go off to sleep, their servants will become their masters.

"The only way I know to prevent such a catastrophe is for these thirty-five crores to be industrious and wise. This they can only be, if they will take up the spinning wheel and the other village industries. They will not take to them unintelligently. I can tell you from my experience that the effort means adult education of the correct type and requires possession of patience, moral fibre and a scientific and practical knowledge of the industry the worker seeks to introduce in the village of his choice.

"In such a scheme, the spinning wheel becomes its centre. If you call it the solar system, the wheel becomes the golden disc, and industries the planets revolving round it, in obedience to the inviolable law of the system. When the sun lost its illuminating power by the action of the East India Company, the planets lost their power and became invisible or almost so. The sun is being reinstated in his past status now and the planets are regaining their motion in exact proportion to the strength of the sun.

"Now perhaps you will understand the meaning and the message of the charkha. I said in 1920 that if the Congress truly and successfully worked the programme laid down in 1920, including the fourfold constructive programme of khadi, communal unity, prohibition, and removal by Hindus of untouchability, the attainment of swaraj within a year was a certainty. I am neither sorry for, nor ashamed of having made that declaration. And I would like to repeat that declaration before you today. Whenever the fourfold programme is achieved in its fulness, you can have swaraj for the asking. For, you will then have attained the power to take it. Just think for a moment where the charkha stands today in your faith or action. Is the mutual secret assassination of Bombay a sign of communal unity? Where is the total prohibition? Have the Hindus rid themselves of untouchability root and branch? One swallow does not make a summer. Travancore's great proclamation may be the beginning of the end, but it is not the end. If we remove the untouchability of Harijans, but treat Muslims or others as such, we have not removed the blot. 'All land belongs to God' has a deeper meaning. Like the earth, we also belong to God, and we must all feel like one and not erect boundary walls and issue prohibition decrees against one another.

"This is the non-violent way in action. If we could but fulfil this programme, there would be no need to offer civil disobedience, and there would certainly be no need to do violence. Thirty-five crores of people, conscious of their numerical strength as one man, would be ashamed of doing violence to 70,000 white men in India, no matter how capable they are of dealing destruction and administering poison gas to millions in a moment. The charkha understood intelligently can spin not only economic salvation, but can also revolutionize our minds and hearts and demonstrate to us that non-violent approach to swaraj is the safest and the easiest. Though the progress may seem slow, it will prove quickest in the long run.

"Believe me, if Jawaharlal is not in jail today, it is not because he is afraid of it. He is quite capable of walking into prison doors, as of mounting the gallows with a smile on his lips. I do not think I have lost the power or faith in the efficacy of such suffering. But there is no issue for it today, as far as I can see. But what I feel is that all that suffering can be avoided, if by united faith and will we achieve the constructive programme. If we can, I promise that we won't need to struggle with or against the British nation, but Lord Linlithgow will

come to us and own that he was mistaken in his disbelief of our non-violence and truth and will undertake on behalf of his nation to abide by our decisions. Whether he does or not, I am working towards that end and no other: 'All belongs to God.' "

The village Congress was unique in many ways. In spite of the multitudes that gathered there, there was no scramble, no hustling, and no noise. The volunteers were drawn from the villages, few of them had received previous training, and yet they did their duty no less efficiently than the trained volunteers. For managing the crowds no barbed-wire fences were erected but just ordinary village hedges. The kitchen department struck a new path: unpolished rice, hand-ground flour, good clean ghee, *ghani*-pressed oil and *gur* formed an essential part of the food served to the delegates and visitors. The sanitation arrangements drew praise from Gandhi. For the first time in the history of the Congress was the sanitation and scavenging department in charge of Brahmins turned bhangis. Appa Patwardhan, a Brahmin and once a professor, led the way.

In giving his tribute to the workers, Gandhi said: "You are all mute servants, and you have earned the praise of everyone who has come here. You were quick to carry out orders, never to issue them and you did not hesitate to do what are supposed to be the meanest jobs. But that is the great merit of Maharashtra, which has many selfless workers who have kept before them not the ideal to lead, but to serve. If Tilak Maharaj taught us that swaraj is our birthright, he has also taught us that selfless service is the key to win it."

The Faizpur Congress closed with Gandhi's address. "We want this contact with the villagers to grow," he said. "It will be like Kumbha Mela when lakhs of pilgrims gather. But this *mela* will welcome the Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis and others and all will join together to pray for swaraj. Then you will decide how to achieve it and fight the Government. Your constituent assembly can sit anywhere you like but the real constituent assembly will be in villages like Faizpur."

Pilgrimage To Travancore

1937

THE CONGRESS at Faizpur over, the leaders plunged themselves into electioneering. Gandhi was fully absorbed in constructive work and devoted columns of *Harijan* almost entirely to village reconstruction. Depicting an ideal village, he wrote:

"An ideal Indian village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation, built of a material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages will have courtyards enabling the householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a co-operative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central factor, and it will have panchayats for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own khadi. This is roughly my idea of a model village.

"In the present circumstances, its cottages will remain what they are with slight improvements. Given a good zamindar, where there is one, or co-operation among the people, almost the whole of the programme other than model cottages can be worked out at an expenditure within the means of the villagers including the zamindar or zamindars, without Government assistance. With that assistance there is no limit to the possibility of village reconstruction. But my task just now is to discover what the villagers can do to help themselves, if they have mutual co-operation and contribute voluntary labour for the common good. I am convinced that they can, under intelligent guidance, double the village income as distinguished from individual income. There are in our villages inexhaustible resources not for commercial purposes in every case but certainly for the local

purposes, in almost every case. The greatest tragedy is the hopeless unwillingness of the villagers to better their lot.

"The very first problem the village worker will solve is its sanitation. It is the most neglected of all the problems that baffle workers and that undermine the physical well-being and breed disease. If the worker became a voluntary bhangi, he would begin by collecting the night-soil and turning it into manure and sweeping village streets. He will tell people how and where they should perform daily functions and speak to them on the value of sanitation and the great injury caused by its neglect. The worker will continue to do the work whether the villagers listen to him or no."

He tried to infuse scientific spirit into constructive work. In an absorbing article under "What Is Khadi Science?" he wrote:

"I have often said that if khadi is a sound economic proposition it is also a science and a romance. I believe there is a book called *The Romance of Cotton* wherein the origin of cotton has been traced and an attempt made to show how its discovery altered the course of civilization. Everything can be turned into a science or a romance, if there is a scientific or romantic spirit behind it. Some people scoff at khadi and betray signs of impatience or disgust, when one talks of spinning. But it ceases to be an object of disgust or ridicule immediately you attribute to it the power of removing India-wide idleness, unemployment and consequent pauperism. It need not be, as a matter of fact, a panacea for the three ills. To be absorbingly interesting, the mere honest attributing of the power is enough. But you cannot attribute that potency to khadi and pursue it as some do in the manner of an ignorant needy artisan who gins, cards, spins or weaves, because he must for his bread. A believer in its potency will pursue it in a deliberate, wise, methodical manner and in a scientific spirit, taking nothing for granted, testing every proposition, checking facts and figures, undaunted by defeats, unelated by petty successes, never satisfied till the goal is reached. Maganlal Gandhi had a living faith in the potency of khadi. It was for him a thrilling romance. And he wrote the elements of the science of khadi. No detail was too trifling for him, and no scheme was too big for him. Richard Gregg had and has the same fire in him. He has given it a universal meaning. His *Economics of Khaddar* is an original contribution to the movement. He recognizes the spinning wheel as the symbol *par excellence* of nonviolence. It may or may not be all that. But their belief gave the late

Maganlal Gandhi and gives Richard Gregg all the joy and pleasure derivable from any fascinating theme. A science to be science must afford the fullest scope for satisfying the hunger of body, mind and soul. Sceptics have wondered how khadi can afford such satisfaction or in other words, what I mean when I use the expression 'science of khadi'. I cannot better answer the question than by copying below the questions framed by me hurriedly for a khadi worker who offered to be examined by me. The questions were not framed in their logical sequence, nor were they exhaustive. They admit of rearrangement and addition. But I reproduce a translation made for me by a friend of the original in Hindi.

"1. How much cotton is produced in India and where? Name the varieties. How much remains in India, how much is spun by hand, how much goes to England and other lands?

"2. (a) What quantity of cloth is manufactured in Indian mills? How much of it is used in India and how much is exported?

(b) Of the above how much is manufactured from swadeshi mill yarn and how much from foreign mill yarn?

(c) How much cloth is imported?

(d) What quantity of khadi is produced in India?

(NOTE: Give your answers in square yards and in terms of money.)

"3. Discuss the merits and demerits of the three kinds of cloth mentioned above.

"4. Some say that khadi is dear, coarse and not lasting. Give your answers to these complaints, and where there is foundation for any of them offer your solution.

"5. In the A.-I.S.A. khadi work how many spinners are engaged? How much have they earned during all these years? Give the number of mill spinners and their total annual earnings.

"6. (a) How is the work of the A.-I.S.A. carried on? How much is spent by them in administration? (b) What staff is employed in the running of a swadeshi mill, and what proportion of wages do such persons get in comparison with the mill hands?

"7. (a) What place, in your opinion, does clothing occupy in the necessaries of life? (b) Name the chief necessaries of life and give their proportionate percentages.

"8. If everyone in India gave up wearing mill-made cloth, whether foreign or Indian, how much money would remain in India and to whom would it go?

"9. What does India export in place of the cloth she imports? What loss, if any, does India sustain through this exchange?

"10. What percentage of the population is able to buy cloth?

"11. What is the percentage of those who have the leisure to make their own cloth? And how?

"12. 'Khadi will establish perfect economic balance.' Is this statement really correct? Give reasons for your answer.

"13. If khadi became universal, what effect would this have on trade, occupation and transport, and in what manner?

"14. Assuming that for another fifty years khadi does not become universal, what is likely to be the effect on the economic condition of our people?"

In the second part of the paper the following technical questions were put:

"1. Give a description of current Indian spinning wheels. Which is the best amongst them? Give the drawings of any four spinning wheels and the correct measurement of each constituent part. State the species of wood employed, the length and the girth of the spindle and the thickness of the *mal*.

"2. Compare the current charkhas with the Yeravda charkha in the matter of speed, cost and general advantages.

"3. How would you ascertain the variety of cotton, the strength of the yarn, and the count of spun yarn?

"4. Of what count and strength is the yarn you spin? What is your speed on *takli* and wheel? Which wheel do you generally use?

"5. How much cloth does a man and a woman require respectively for his or her clothing? How much yarn is required for making the same, and how much time is necessary for spinning it?

"6. How much yarn is required to clothe one family? How much cotton is needed to produce the above? How much land is required for growing the necessary amount of cotton? (The family consists of a father, mother and three children—one girl and two boys—seven, five and three years old.)

"7. Compare the current carding bow with the new ones. How much do you card per hour? How can you judge whether the cotton is properly carded or not? How many slivers do you make from one tola of cotton?

"8. How much cotton can you gin in one hour? Compare ginning by hand with ginning by machine, giving the respective merits and

demerits of either process. Describe and give a drawing of the current hand-ginning machine.

"9. Give the length of the yarn of 20 counts required to weave one yard of cloth, 36 inches wide. How many hands are required to weave the same?

"10. Compare the pit loom with the shuttle loom."

Newspapers were full of electioneering but *Harijan* took notice of the election campaign only so far it could be utilized for educating the 350,000 voters on the vital question of untouchability. In a short note, Gandhi wrote:

"Harijan workers can utilize the occasion of the elections for educating the voters on the question of untouchability and of committing the candidates definitely to one side or the other. They can be asked these questions: 'Are you in favour of complete removal of untouchability? Are you in favour of removing the legal bar on the grounds of custom and legislation, permitting temple authorities to open temples to Harijans where *savarna* Hindu opinion is ripe for the step? Are you in favour of enforcing the common law in the matter of Harijans freely using public wells, schools, and the like?'

"A correspondent writes to say that there is a conspiracy of silence among candidates on this question. If there is, it can be broken by energetic Harijan workers simply putting at voters' meetings questions like those I have suggested. Enlightened voters interested in the purification of Hinduism can do a great deal to educate and mould the public opinion in this matter. It is a pity that the question of untouchability can at all become an issue between rival candidates, or between candidates and electors. But pity or no pity, we have to face the facts as they are today."

In the middle of January 1937, Gandhi started for Travancore. He asked Kanu, his grand-nephew, to take a *dilruba*. "This visit to Tranvancore is going to be a pilgrimage," he said. "We shall have to have Tulsi Ramayana reading everywhere, and sometimes, if God wills it, at public places also, and we cannot get a *dilruba* there."

The itinerary was so arranged that Gandhi should make a point of visiting every important temple. The stirring speech at Trivandrum on January 13 was made after he had visited the famous temple of Ananta Padmanabha, the ruler's own temple:

"I would like to mention one sorrow that has oppressed me, ever since I came here. I have wondered why you have called this cele-

bration Ezhava Temple-Entry Proclamation celebrations. I wonder if presently we shall have all-Travancore Pulaya and pariah celebrations. I know and I grant that the Ezhavas are a great and growing and important community in Travancore, but have I not seen the Pulayas and pariahs of Travancore? When I have met them I have not been able to stare them straight in their faces. I have felt deeply humiliated. I shall never forget the sight of an old Pulaya man shaking with fear, as he was brought to me, and as he tried to hand me a paper which had been put into his hands. He was brought to me in Cochin, as I was passing through the crowds in the streets. I was told that he held in his hand an address to be given me on behalf of the Pulayas. His withered hands, as they were shaking, could not deliver that address in my hands. There was no lustre in his eyes. I do not know that I saw even a ray of hope in those deep sunken eyes. He did not know what he was being called upon to do. I did not know that he could understand the choice Malayalam which the Nambudri volunteer was speaking. I seized the situation at a glance. I hung my head in shame and in sorrow, and I felt it my duty to snatch that precious paper from his hands. Why is he not a member of today's celebration committee? I know that he is nameless. Most probably he is dead. If he is alive, perhaps he does not know what is happening in Travancore today. So I asked myself whether you members of this celebration committee, you members of this vast gathering do or do not represent such men. And I must tell you with all respect and humility that if this vast assembly does not represent these Pulayas, then I am certain that there is no place in your midst for me. If this is a purely religious movement, if this is a purely religious revival, if it has no taint of base 'self' in it, then you will be denying yourself and nullifying the effect of this great proclamation if you do not represent the lowest and the least in our midst.

"You heard with what force Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar spoke to this meeting. The maharaja has given you a Smriti, but it is for you to carry it out and to breathe life into it, and you will hopelessly fail to do that unless you rise to the occasion and see to it that this religious spirit pervades the whole of Travancore—both *avarnas* and *savarnas*. I tell you if you approach this great step, each with his own mental reservation, and not give effect to it whole-heartedly, you will find this proclamation a nine days' wonder. Therefore, I want you to understand that whilst you are properly rejoicing over this

proclamation and celebrating it with the joy and zeal I see on your faces, you will not be doing your duty if you do not realize your responsibility to the whole of the community that had been so far excluded. I am speaking to you from the fullness of my heart, and when heart is speaking to hearts, it expects to find a lodgement in those hearts.

"I must mention what I saw at the great Padmanabha temple. It will perhaps best illustrate what I am saying about the pure and spiritual revival. In the days of my youth, I went to many temples with the faith and devotion with which my parents had fired me. But of late years I have not been visiting temples, and ever since I have been engaged in anti-untouchability work, I have refrained from going to temples unless they were open to everyone called untouchable. So what I saw this morning at the temple dawned upon me with the same newness with which it must have dawned upon so many *avarna* Hindus who must have gone to the temple after the proclamation. In imagination, my mind travelled back to the prehistoric centuries when they began to convey the message of God in stone and metal. I saw quite clearly that the priest who was interpreting each figure in his own choice Hindi did not want to tell me that each of these figures was God. But without giving me that particular interpretation he made me realize that these temples were so many bridges between the unseen, invisible and indefinable God and ourselves who are infinitesimal drops in the infinite ocean. We the human family are not all philosophers. We are of the earth, very earthy, and are not satisfied with contemplating the invisible God. Somehow or other, we want something which we can touch, something which we can see, something before which we can kneel down. It does not matter whether it is a book, or an empty stone building or a stone building inhabited by numerous figures. A book will satisfy some, an empty building will satisfy some others, and many others will not be satisfied, unless they see something inhabiting the empty buildings. Then I ask you to approach these temples not as if they represented a body of superstitions. If you approach these temples with faith in them, you will know each time you visit them you will come away from them purified and with your faith more and more in the living God.

"Anyway, I have looked upon this proclamation as a pure religious act. I have regarded this visit to Travancore in the spirit of a

pilgrimage, and I am going to these temples as an untouchable suddenly made touchable. If all of you will approach this proclamation in this spirit, you will abolish all distinctions between *savarnas* and *avarnas*, as also all those distinctions which unfortunately still exist between *avarnas* and *avarnas*. Finally, you will not be satisfied until you have lifted up your brothers and sisters who are supposed to be the least and the lowest, to heights which you have attained yourselves. True spiritual regeneration must include economic uplift and removal of ignorance and everything that goes to retard human progress. May God enable you to realize to the full the possibilities that are embedded in this proclamation of the maharaja."

During his two-day stay in Trivandrum he paid a visit to Harijan boys' hostel. "We badly need two good cows," said one. "Can't you send them from Gujarat?" "Yes," said Gandhi, "give me the money." "But we have no money," pleaded the boys. "Why not steal one of the golden pots from the great state temple?" asked Gandhi raising hearty laughter. "No, stealing is not the thing, for theft must be a thing unknown in a Hindu state like Travancore. But begging for a good purpose, like feeding Harijan boys, can't be unknown. You tell the authorities that if they can afford to pour out milk for the Brahmins from those golden pots, would they not pour out a little buttermilk for Harijan boys from the brass pots, now that they have abolished untouchability?"

In all his moments of triumph and agony, Gandhi preached the same gospel: "We cannot afford to rest on the oars." Addressing the Pulayas on January 14, he observed: "The proclamation cannot do everything, although it has worked wonders. To remove untouchability root and branch from this soil and for that matter from India rests with you and me. I hope you will make a wise and religious use of the proclamation. It depends upon our mental condition, whether we gain something or do not gain anything by going to the temples. We have to approach the temples in a humble penitent mood. They are so many houses of God. Of course, God resides in every human form, indeed in every particle of His creation, in everything that is on this earth. But since, we fallible mortals, do not appreciate the fact that God is everywhere, we impute special sanctity to temples and think that God resides there. And so when we approach temples we must cleanse our bodies, our minds and our hearts, and we should enter them in a prayerful mood and ask God to make us purer men

and purer women for having entered their portals. And if you will take this advice of an old man, this physical deliverance that you have secured will be a deliverance of the soul."

Explaining the significance of the proclamation, he said at Tecklai: "If all men and women here think or harbour untouchability in their hearts, they have not given effect to the proclamation. That proclamation tells you—every man and woman or child—that henceforth there is no untouchability in Travancore, and that in the sight of God and man, Nairs and Nambudris, Ezhavas, Pulayas and pariahs, and what not, are equal children of God. And when they get entrance to the Holy of Holies, naturally all other distinctions fall to the ground. Therefore, those who are better off will take care to see that they will raise those who are worse off economically and socially. And if you have flattered yourself with the belief that you are *savarnas,* you should bring the *avarnas* out of their houses and teach them the art of worship. But I know that even the *savarnas* have forgotten the art of worship. However, now that the proclamation has purified the atmosphere, you must learn the art and teach it to the *avarnas.*"

As Gandhi went south towards Cape Comorin, he came to a small place called Tiruwattar, where an ancient temple stood. Sitting on the top of a high flight of steps that lead to the temple, he addressed some ten thousand people:

"I was at this place not many years ago when the forbidding looking walls of this temple seemed to say, 'not yet for you this place.' Nobody had thought some months ago that there would be a proclamation. The sins of past ages have been obliterated by literally a stroke of the pen. Though it was the hand of the maharaja that had traced the signature over the proclamation, the spirit behind was that of Lord Padmanabhaswami. I understand only today the beautiful legend that passes current in Travancore about the maharaja. As you all know—I suppose every child in Travancore knows—that the maharajas in Travancore are known as Padmanabhadas. They are the viceroys of Padmanabhaswami, and as I understood yesterday the maharaja has to go from day to day to that temple and to receive instructions about the day's work from Padmanabhaswami. That the thing does not happen as I have described to you as between man and man is true, but the spirit behind the legend is an excellent spirit. It means that the maharaja may not do anything that is wrong or sinful and has not the stamp of God's approval. And so as I said, it is

the spirit of God that moved the maharaja to take the great step he has taken, and I wish to congratulate you who are the beneficiaries under the great proclamation. It is a great act whose significance we are yet too near in time to realize. During my last tour, I addressed the gathering outside the forbidding looking temple walls as they then appeared to me. I regarded myself voluntarily a Pulaya or pariah, the lowest amongst the low, a Harijan amongst Harijans. But the maharaja himself, as I have now learnt, bears the title of servant of God, that is, Harijan, and proudly signs him as such. No doubt, he is the first among God's servants, let us hope by right of service. He is not the first lord among lords and masters. In service, there is always open and meritorious competition. It demands no reward, no distinction. Let us look at the proclamation in this light. Let Nambudris and other Brahmins and the so-called high-caste people of Travancore rise to the occasion and be voluntarily Harijans amongst Harijans, servants of God, and let all the world know by their action, that in virtue of the proclamation, there is none high and none low but all are equal in the eyes of God."

On January 14, at Nagercoil, 50,000 people assembled to hear him. "Ever since my coming to Travancore," he said, "I have been doing nothing but visiting the temples which were until little while ago forbidden ground to me by my own choice. You and I have to find out whether a living God resides in these temples. And I assure you that our search will be in vain, unless we put our hearts into it and apply our minds to it."

On January 15, Gandhi reached Cape Comorin where he wrote an article on Travancore pilgrimage:

"I am writing this at the Cape, in front of the sea, where three waters meet and furnish a sight unequalled in the world. For, this is no port of call for vessels. Like the goddess, the waters around are virgin. The Cape has no population worth the name. The place is eminently fitted for contemplation. This is the third day of the pilgrimage. Having mentally and voluntarily become an untouchable and, therefore, shunned the temples which were barred against fellow untouchables, I feel like them the joy of the removal of the bar. I approached the great temple in Trivandrum with awe and due veneration. Curiosity had given way to the incoming of something that was to fill the void of years. As I write these lines I am reminded of the peace I felt in the Madras cathedral to which Bishop Whitehead

had taken me now over twenty years ago. In that cathedral on the particular morning, so far as I can remember, we were the only two persons present. In the Trivandrum temple, there were thousands awaiting the arrival of my party. But there was no noise, no bustle. Untouchables of yesterday were in the silent concourse in perhaps equal numbers. I could not distinguish between the two. All had the same kind of garments. Evidently the custom is to have only seamless wear which need not be more than a lungi, never more than a wrapper added to it. The majority including the priests were bare-bodied. In the midst of this vast assemblage, I seemed to enjoy the kind of peace I had felt in the Madras cathedral. Yet the two were quite different. The Madras peace had no background. This in Padmanabha temple had. And I would not have experienced it, if the crowd had been boisterous, or at all in a non-spiritual mood. All those bare bodies in spotlessly white lungis standing row upon row, in perfectly silent and reverent attitude, produced an impression upon me which will endure till life lasts. The entry into the very spacious temple crowded with images, which the guiding priest in his choice Hindi made almost to speak, was no less soul-stirring. Then we reached the great central image. It was all like a day-dream. The knowledge that I was visiting the temple designed specially for the Maharajas of Travancore and that too in the company of the hitherto despised untouchables, heightened the effect which the images and surroundings had produced upon me. The silence and the attitude of worship have continued at the three temples I visited between Trivandrum and the Cape. This morning I visited the famous temple at the Cape, dedicated to the Virgin. Accompanied by a large party of Harijans who were singing *bhajans*, we passed through the street leading to the temple. The street like the temple was forbidden to the untouchables. But now, without any opposition from anywhere, we walked through it and then into the temple, as if we had never been prohibited. It is a dream realized in a manner and in a place where the realization seemed almost unthinkable before it was realized elsewhere. 'You may have temples opened in the north, but you will never succeed in having them opened in Cochin and Travancore, the citadels of orthodoxy,' used to be told before. Now one citadel has yielded with rare generosity and grace. The genuineness of the generosity and grace seems to have disarmed all opposition. The legend attached to the acts of the maharajas of Travancore had perhaps its

due share in the conversion of the people. The maharajas are called Padmanabhadas, meaning, the servants of Padmanabha, God. The maharajas are supposed to visit the temple every morning—and I understand they do whilst in Trivandrum—and receive instructions for the day's work from God. The proclamation is, therefore, an act of God through His servant, the present maharaja. Whatever may be the cause, the fact of the proclamation being given effect to by overwhelming number of *savarnas* and being freely availed of by *avarnas* stands out as a miracle.

"But the very miracle weighs me down with a sense of responsibility which chastens me and affects my elation. If what is going on today is to be consolidated, there must be continued effort by all true Harijan workers for the education of both *savarnas* and *avarnas* on the meaning of the proclamation. But a few months ago it was the fashion on the part of *savarnas* to say that *avarnas* did not want temple entry. It was equally the fashion on the part of some of the vocal members among the *avarnas* to say that they did not care for temple entry and that they cared only for economic uplift. Both mistook the meaning of the anti-untouchability campaign. The Travancore experience has opened their eyes. The right of entering temples abolishes untouchability at a stroke—untouchability that prevented a large section of Hindus from sharing with the rest the privilege of worship in the same manner as the latter. Economic uplift was there. But the best among the *avarnas* felt the sting of the deprivation. It soured them and angered them against the haughty *savarnas*. Now all that has changed. The *avarnas* feel the glow of freedom which they had never felt before.

"This marvellous result may easily be nullified if it is not followed out to its logical conclusion. Before *avarnas* can forget the past, they must be made conscious of what they have come to. The message of freedom must be carried to the humblest hut. The minds of the Pulayas and the pariahs should be opened to the implications of the suddenly acquired freedom. This does not need an elaborate programme of literacy. That must come. But what is needed is immediate human contact. For this, an army of volunteer workers of the right type is needed. Just as the message of freedom has to be taken to the *avarna* huts, so has it to be taken to the *savarna* homes.

"Then there is the question of reform of temples from within. Here I cannot do better than quote from a letter from a Musalman friend

who believes in Hinduism as much as he believes in Islam: 'You will soon be going to Travancore to celebrate the entry of Harijans into the temples thrown open to them. It is indeed a step forward. But what we need most is the restoration of the temples to their old pristine purity and sanctity. The ideal lying behind the temples is most holy. In the temples of ancient India resided great *rishis* who imparted divine wisdom. Today the priest sits there barring the way to those who need instruction and help to solve the problem of life. Alas! the priests of all religions are more in need of instruction than the poor masses.'

"These words are true. Never was the need for temple reform more urgent than today. Fortunately in Travancore the vast majority of temples belong to the state and are under special management. The temples are kept clean and often undergo improvement and addition. They are never empty. They supply a felt want. If the priests had better education and would be custodians of the spirituality of the people, the temples would be houses both of worship and spiritual instruction as they were before."

From Cape Comorin Gandhi turned northwards to Vaikom. In his many utterances there contained an appeal to the maharaja to see that the temples were renovated spiritually and "have the authority and sanctity that they used undoubtedly to have at one time". Describing what the priests should be and what they should not be, he observed: "They should not be ignorant people following their calling for a livelihood, but they should be men who are proud of their privilege of bringing the message of God to temple-goers, showing by their own conduct and their life that these temples are abodes of divinity." These remarks were made because of certain facts actually observed by Gandhi. At one place the priests were found to be ignorant of even the name of *Ishopanishad*.

For the first time at the public meeting in Quilon on January 16, Gandhi summed up the credal belief of Hinduism in an Upanishadic mantra, and thereafter at every meeting he gave lucid and simple commentaries on the numerous implications of that mantra. He described it at one meeting as the golden key for the solution of all the difficulties and doubts that may assail one's heart. "Remember that one verse of *Ishopanishad* and forget all about the other scriptures. You can, of course, drown yourselves and be suffocated in the ocean of scriptures. They are good for the learned if they will be humble

and wise, but for ordinary man in the street nothing but that mantra is necessary to carry him across the ocean."

At Quilon, he said: "Let me for a few moments consider what Hinduism consists of, what it is that has fired so many saints about whom we have historical record. Why has it contributed so many philosophers to the world? And what is it in Hinduism that has so enthused its devotees for centuries? Did they see untouchability in Hinduism and still enthuse over it? In the midst of my campaign against untouchability I have been asked by several workers as to the essence of Hinduism. Neither have we simple Kalma, they said, that we find in Islam, nor have we 3-16 John of the Bible. Have we or have we not something that will answer the demands of the most philosophic amongst the Hindus or the most matter-of-fact among them? Some have said, and not without good reason, the Gayatri answers that purpose. I have perhaps recited the Gayatri mantra, a thousand times, having understood the meaning of it. But still it seems to me that it did not answer the whole of my aspirations. Then as you are aware, I have, for years past, been swearing by the Gita and have said that it answers all my difficulties, and has been my Kamadhenu, my guide, my open sesame, on hundreds of moments of doubt and difficulty. I cannot recall a single occasion when it has failed me. But it is not a book that I can place before the whole of this audience. It requires a prayerful study before the Kamadhenu yields the rich milk she holds in her udders.

"But I have fixed upon one mantra that I am going to recite to you, as containing the whole essence of Hinduism. Many of you, I think, know the *Ishopanishad*. I read it years ago with translation and commentary. I learnt it by heart in Yeravda jail. But it did not then captivate me, as it has done during the past few months, and I have now come to the final conclusion that if all the Upanishads and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse in the *Ishopanishad* were left intact in the memory of Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever.

"Now this mantra divides itself in four parts. The first part reads: 'All this that we see in this great universe is pervaded by God.' Then come the second and third parts which read together. I divide these into two and translate them thus: 'Renounce it and enjoy it.' There is another rendering which means the same thing, though: 'Enjoy what He gives you.' Even so you can divide it into two parts. Then

follows the final and the most important part, which means: 'Do not covet anybody's wealth or possession.' All the other mantras of that ancient Upanishad are a commentary or an attempt to give us the full meaning of the first mantra. As I read the mantra in the light of the Gita or the Gita in the light of the mantra I find that the Gita is a commentary on this mantra. It seems to me to satisfy the cravings of the socialist and the communist, the philosopher and the economist. I venture to suggest to all who do not belong to the Hindu faith that it satisfies their cravings also. And if it is true—and I hold it to be true—you need not take anything in Hinduism which is inconsistent with or contrary to the meaning of this mantra. What more can a man in the street want to learn than this that the one God and Creator and Master of all that lives pervades this universe? The three other parts of the mantra follow directly from the first. If you believe that God pervades everything that He has created, you must believe that you cannot enjoy anything that is not given by Him. And seeing that He is the Creator of His numberless children, it follows that you cannot covet anybody's possession. If you think that you are one of His numerous creatures, it behoves you to renounce everything and lay it at His feet. That means that the act of renunciation of everything is not a mere physical renunciation but represents a second or new birth. It is a deliberate act, not done in ignorance. It is a regeneration. And since he who holds the body must eat and drink and clothe himself, he must naturally seek all that he needs from Him. And he gets it as a natural reward of that renunciation. As if this was not enough, the mantra closes with this magnificent thought: 'Do not covet anybody's possession.' The moment you carry out these precepts, you become a wise citizen of the world, living at peace with all that lives. It satisfies one's highest aspirations on this earth and hereafter. No doubt, it will not satisfy the aspiration of him who does not believe in God and His undisputed sovereignty. It is no idle thing that the Maharaja of Travancore is called Padmanabhadas. It is a great thought, we know that God Himself has taken the title of Dasanudas, the servant of servants. If all the princes would call themselves servants of God, they would be correctly describing themselves, but they cannot be servants of God unless they are servants of the people. If zamindars and monied men would treat themselves as trustees and perform the act of renunciation, this world would indeed be a blessed world to live in."

The pilgrimage became more and more eventful. At Vaikom, he addressed a mammoth gathering and he concluded thus:

"Now I want to take you all on the wings of your imagination to Cochin. I have come to the borders of Cochin, as far as it was possible, and I understand on the other side of the waters at a distance of less than ten miles lies Cochin. I suppose the last time I came to Vaikom I came through Cochin. But since I am not going to Cochin, I may permit myself to refer to Cochin which is so intimately connected with Travancore. Conditions in both the states are identical and the practices and usages in the two states are the same. I understand that the Maharaja of Cochin has even some rights and privileges with regard to the Vaikom temple. I must confess to you that I am impatient to see that the Maharaja of Cochin follows in the footsteps of the Maharaja of Travancore. I have no desire to embarrass His Highness. I am myself an old man, awaiting any day the warrant of Yamaraja. The maharaja is older than I by six years. I assure you that whilst I am overjoyed over the proclamation and the celebrations in Travancore state, I am oppressed by the responsibility which touches every *savarna* Hindu—not that it devolves any the less on the devoted heads of *avarna* Hindus. I want you to adopt a respectful and prayerful attitude towards the old Maharaja of Cochin. But with due regard to his age and rank, we should be false to the faith we hold in common with him, we should be false to truth, if we did not convey to him our deepest wishes. Then let me give you a little tip. I want you to be at Cochin in imagination. That means that your conduct should affect the decision of the Maharaja of Cochin. How can this be done? By prayerful and religious spirit, as expressed in your own individual conduct, you can influence His Highness. I do not suggest sending petitions to the Maharaja of Cochin. Petitions may be submitted by the people of Cochin, but you the people of Travancore can do something better. Old men are never moved by appeals to the intellect. I tell you that there are many young men after me to convert me to their own views, and they find that they cannot easily take me with them. But the hearts of old men become increasingly responsive with age, and so whenever young men or young women want me to do anything they have to get round not my intellect or reason but my heart. So also must it happen to the old Maharaja of Cochin, and you can touch his heart, not through any newspaper propaganda, but by becoming better Hindus under the

liberties granted by the proclamation, by showing that you *savarna* Hindus have not lost a little of your religious fervour, nor have the temples a little of the sanctity attached to them, by the readmission of *avarnas* to them.

"I have often said and certainly held the belief that our temples were losing their sanctity by reason of our criminal neglect of our untouchable brethren. If you realize your responsibility under the new proclamation, you will at once think with me that you cannot be indifferent to what temples mean to you and whether you go there or not. When the best of you continue to go to the temples and see to it that the temples undergo a process of regeneration and the life of the *avarnas* become purified, no maharaja can help being moved by such a spectacle. I tell you if you have really understood the spirit of the proclamation, the silent revolution that the Hindu life will undergo in Travancore will be irresistible and will overtake not only Cochin but every corner of Hindustan. May God grant that even as the foundation of temple entry was laid by such humble workers like Madhavan and the late Krishnaswami and Kelappan, may God grant that you people of Vaikom will lay the foundation of the purification of Hinduism, and thus induce the Maharaja of Cochin to open all the temples in his state and thus render an equally great service to Hinduism with the Maharaja of Travancore."

On January 21, Gandhi spoke at Kottarakara, the very last stage of his pilgrimage: "I am taking away with me spiritual treasures of which I had not dreamt before. Your magnificent temples were as much closed against me, by a voluntary effort on my part, as they were against the tallest amongst the Ezhavas, Pulayas and pariahs, who were until the other day despised by the *savarna* Hindus. But having found the doors of the temples flung open by the very generous act of His Highness, I entered them with the same joy that must have been felt by thousands of Ezhavas, Pulayas and pariahs, who must have gone to these temples since the proclamation. After having entered the responsible life, I cannot say that I ever was a habitual temple-goer. But the possibility of spiritual growth by entering these temples in a spiritual and devotional mood has dawned upon me after all these visits to these temples in a devotional and prayerful mood, as it had never before been opened to me. But, of course, one needs proper attitude of mind before one can derive the highest consolation and spiritual joy from visiting these temples.

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi's hut at Faizpur, where the first village Congress was held in December 1936

On the way to the exhibition, Faizpur

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi declaring open Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition at Faizpur, December 25, 1936

With Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress President, Faizpur



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi's caricature by Oscar Berger

Gandhi on the ashram grounds, Segaon, 1937 *Photograph : Counsic Bros.*

His fourth visit to Travancore, January 1937 *Courtesy : C. P. Sundram*

Segaon, Wardha.
19-2-37.

Dear Gurudev,

I got your letter of the 10th inst. five days ago. Your trust in me and affection for me are there to be seen in every line but what about my amazing limitations? My shoulders are too weak to bear the burden you wish to impose upon me. My regard for you pulls me in one direction, my reason in the opposite and it would be folly on my part to surrender reason to emotion in a question like the one that faces me. I know that if I undertake the trust I would not need to go in to details of administration but it does imply capacity for financing the institution and what I heard two days ago has deepened my reluctance for I understand that in spite of your promise to me in Delhi you are about to go to Ahmedabad on a begging expedition. I was grieved and I would ask you on bended knees to forego the expedition if it is really decided upon. And in any case I would beg of you to recall my appointment as one of the Trustees.

With love and reverence,
M. K. Gandhi

Gandhi's letter to Tagore, dated Segaon, February 19, 1937



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi accompanied by Vallabhbhai Patel arriving at Wardha from Segaon, February 1937

Segaon, Wardha
2-3-37.

Dear Gurudev,

Your letter has caused me much distress. That a letter which was written out of love and reverence should have been so misunderstood is a revelation. There was no question of suspicion and, therefore, no question of misjudging you. I simply put before you my meaning

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of promise. I thought myself to be so near you that I could dare playfully to accuse you of a contemplated breach of promise. My motive was absolutely plain. I wanted somehow or other to wean you from any further begging expedition — a phrase which you and I used often enough in Delhi. Of course I know

of trusteeship. I have been trustee before now of several institutions and I have worn myself out to see that they were properly financed. Acceptance of the burden by me of Vishwabharati could mean nothing to me unless it at least meant that I would be able to discharge the financial burden. As to the breach

your religion and, oh, India is proud of it. Let us have as much of it as you can give but never with the burden hanging over your head of collecting money for Vishwabharati against the expression of yourself before the public.

Hope this letter will undo the grief that has been caused to you by my previous letter. [illegible]

Courtesy: Visva-Bharati

Gandhi's letter to Tagore, dated Segaon, March 2, 1937

Dear Gurudev,

I have just received your letter of 5th inst. Had I not to go to Belgaum on the very date you will have the opening ceremony, I would most certainly have come not only for the [illegible] but also to see you and Santiniketan which I have not seen now for years. I shall be with you in spirit when Jawaharlal will be performing the ceremony. May the Chinese Hall be a symbol of living contact between China & India.

The letter you wrote to me over that unmoving misunderstanding lies in my pocket as a treasure. It brought tears of joy to my eyes. It was so worthy of you.

With love & respects

Yours,

M. K. Gandhi

Segaon,
Wardha
9-4-37

Gandhi's letter to Tagore, dated Segaon, April 9, 1937

"Whatever it may be, I leave this word with you that if you will translate the proclamation that His Highness the Maharaja guided by Padmanabhaswami has given you, you will have to identify yourselves completely with all and abolish the distinctions of high and low, *savarnas* and *avarnas*; and in order to assist you to do so, I want to translate for you the verse I have been putting before the people for the last four or five days. The meaning of that verse is: 'God the Ruler, Master and Lord, pervades everything in the universe down to the tiniest atom.' It means that He is not merely in your heart or my heart, but He is literally and absolutely in every one of the innumerable pores of our skin and the hair of our head. Therefore, He is nearer to you and to me than our nearest ones. Then the first essential of Hinduism is that we realize the truth of this magnificent statement as we realize that we are sitting here and you are hearing me. Having realized the truth, the seer proceeds to say that since God is so near to us and dominates all our actions, we must voluntarily renounce and dedicate at His feet all we have regarded as our own. But even after that act of conscious and deliberate dedication and renunciation, we shall want to eat, clothe ourselves and house ourselves, and so the seer says, you can only after this dedication use these necessaries of life as if they were given to you by God Himself. That requires the same trust, the same faith and the same love that a child without reasoning it out for himself has for his parents. He never reasons out for himself that it is all well with them and for him, so long as his parents are there and so long as they continue to anticipate and supply his wants. Our parents are as much mortal as we ourselves, and, therefore, it is infinitely more logical and necessary for us that we should have as much faith in God to anticipate and supply our wants. And having told us these three things, the seer proceeds to warn us against coveting anybody's possession. Now you will see that if we believe in this mantra—and every Hindu is bound to believe in this—there would be no distinctions like those which have been sapping the very foundation of Hinduism and the Hindu society.

"Now you can also at once realize why temples are and must be an integral part of our lives. We are so easily forgetful of our obligations that we have to renew our vows of loyalty to God, to renew our renunciation and dedication from day to day. These temples are the visible symbols of God's power and authority. They are, therefore,

truly called the houses of God, the houses of prayer. We go there in a prayerful mood and perform, first thing in the morning after ablution, the act of dedication and surrender. Scoffers and sceptics may say that these are figments of imagination, that we are imagining God in the images we see. I will say to the scoffers that it is so. I am not ashamed of confessing that imagination is a powerful factor in life. The temple is not a house of God for, say, my cow, although the cow is as much my fellow being as any human being. But God has not blessed the cow with imagination, and her presence in the temple has no effect on her, but my presence has a well-defined effect, because I have imagined that the particular temple contains the presence of God.

"Therefore, I would love to leave this mantra with you and tell you that whatever is inconsistent with this mantra, you must summarily reject as not Hinduism; and having assimilated all that there is in this mantra, you need not worry about other books that pass by the name of Hindu scriptures. Far be it from me to suggest that all else is absolutely worthless or harmful. There are undoubtedly worthless things that pass current as Hindu shastras, but there are also priceless treasures behind in these books. But you and I have not the time to study them, and if you had the time, I would utter a word of caution to the effect that if a study of scriptures confuse your mind, it would be well to leave them alone and derive your comfort from this mantra to the exclusion of everything else."

On his return journey to Wardha, Gandhi devoted one day for the cyclone area of Guntur district. He hurried through 129 miles from Nidubrole to Bezwada, taking on his way several places, making collections wherever he went. "I want you to be strictly honest with me," he said, "and tell me how many of you have suffered and how many have not. I have worked on many occasions in distressed areas, for example in Bihar, where the distress was infinitely greater than here, but even there cent per cent people had not suffered. If several thousands had suffered, several hundreds had escaped. I am glad, and I know that those who have suffered would not come to attend these meetings. I should have to go to them. Then please make the beginning, and those of you who have not suffered please pay for the sufferers as much as you can."

Gandhi's car drove through the scenes of devastation. "I have been wandering through the cyclone area," he said in a distressed village,

"but I cannot say that I have seen much. If I really wanted to see the cyclone area, I should not have gone about like a lord in a car, but should have walked through it. But I had only a few hours and there is no time left for anything like a study of the situation. The only thing I can do having come here is to say a word of comfort. I know that my voice cannot reach the Government. I have no influence with them, nor have I any with those in charge of affairs here. But I can certainly say that though everyone else may forsake you, God never forsakes people in distress. When I studied Tamil many years ago, I came across a proverb which I cannot forget: 'For those who are helpless, God is the help.' It should not remain merely on our lips, it should enter our hearts, and then no matter how many cyclones we have, we shall rejoice within. That does not mean that you will be lazy. A man who has faith in God works twenty-four hours, for He has given us hands and feet. If we use them, He will give us food and clothing. So you must not expect me to weep with you. My function is to make those who weep forget their sorrow and smile."

Congress Sweeps The Polls

1937

By the end of January 1937, Gandhi went back to Segaon. His first visitors were the members of Y.M.C.A., who had come to acquaint themselves with his village uplift work. "How exactly was this being done?" they asked.

"By living in their midst," said Gandhi, "by having them to work with us and by working for them."

"But does that create in them any ambition to live higher?"

"It does."

"Do they have any big hopes for the future?"

"I do not know," replied Gandhi, "but I think it is better that it comes naturally and gradually. You may be sure that they feel and know that better times are ahead of them."

"We will be going back to America, Europe, Far East. What shall we look for here? How can we take back with us something of the imperishable asset of the Indian civilization? Can we hope to get at the heart of things?"

"It is a very difficult question, and yet perhaps not so difficult to answer," he said, "I would ask you to ignore big cities if you would see the heart of India. The big cities here are but poor editions of your big cities. Therefore, you have to go to the villages, and those too not close by them. Go thirty miles from the railway line where people are untouched by post and telegraphs, and you will see that they show a kind of culture which you miss in the West. You will have to see them with the help of interpreters. You will find there relics of art which has not yet perished, you will find culture which is unmistakable but far different from that of the West. Then you will take away something that may be worth taking. But, of course, it depends on the angle from which you would see things."

The extent to which the Congress had now spread its organization through constructive programme was revealed by its electoral

campaign. Virtually, every village of any size had its Congress office and flag. The campaign, the meetings and processions, the speakers and the slogans, stirred the countryside into a ferment such as it had never before experienced. Nehru shot like an arrow and covered 50,000 miles and addressed over ten million people. "Let every voter, man or woman, do his or her duty by the country and vote for the Congress," he said. "Thus we shall write in millions of hands our flaming resolve to be free." Many of the voters were illiterate and coloured boxes were used for voting instead of ballot-papers. For them the Congress war cry was 'Vote for Gandhi and the yellow box.'

Gandhi kept himself aloof from electioneering and devoted himself to constructive work. On Bakr-Id day he wrote on the cattle wealth of India, in *Harijan* dated February 27.

"This is being written on the Bakr-Id day—a day of rejoicing for Musalmans and grief for Hindus. It is a day of grief for Hindus because their Musalman brethren slaughter cows for sacrifice, though they know that the cow is an object of worship and veneration for Hindus. Though I hold the cow as much in veneration as any Hindu and am responsible for bringing into being the (in my opinion) only scientific society for effectively protecting the cow, I have never sympathized with the Hindu grief and the implied anger against the Musalmans on Bakr-Id. The latter are undoubtedly foolish and obstinate in that they slaughter the cow and needlessly wound Hindu susceptibility. For, there is no religious obligation on the part of the Musalmans to kill the cow on Bakr-Id or any other day. I have heard some Musalmans arguing that Hindus by their worship of the cow make it obligatory on them to kill the cow. This borders on compulsion. But if the Musalman is foolish and obstinate, the Hindu is criminally ignorant and indirectly becomes party to the slaughter of the cow by the Musalmans. For, cows are sold by the Hindus as a rule. Hindu grief and anger are uncalled for. Hindu ignorance is responsible for many more deaths of cows than the deaths caused by the Musalmans' slaughter of the cow for one day in the year. Be it noted that the Hindus are apparently quite reconciled to cow slaughter on days other than Bakr-Id.

"I have in my possession startling authentic figures showing the annual slaughter of cattle and deaths from natural causes. According to the livestock census of 1935, about 80 per cent die naturally and 20 per cent are slaughtered. In 1935, in British India including

Bengal, and Bihar and Orissa, there were over eight crores of cows against just under three crores of buffaloes. Comparison between the censuses of 1935 and 1930 shows that buffalo wealth is on the increase three times that of the cow.

"Now it is common knowledge that the cow is generally owned by Hindus. If they removed their unpardonable ignorance, they could easily prevent many deaths from natural causes. Time was when the number of cows was the measure of a man's wealth. Today the cows are a drag on a man's possessions. It is almost like the depreciation of currency. The only difference is that prevention of depreciation of cattle or rather cow currency is possible by internal effort. The effort is threefold:

"(1) No waste of energy over persuading Musalmans to give up cow slaughter, whether for sacrifice or for food. They must be put on their own honour. (2) Exclusive concentration on the improvement of the cow and, therefore, giving up of buffalo milk and ghee. (3) Exclusive use of dead-cattle hide, and free use other than for food of all the parts of carcasses, and improvement in tanning.

"The material for improvement is ready at hand in the numerous pinjrapoles and *goshalas*, covering the whole country. The only thing needful is to remove certain prejudices and to conduct these institutions on sound scientific lines."

Dr. Crane, an American clergyman, who was in Bombay on Bakr-Id day and had seen cows being slaughtered publicly, was shocked. He could not distinguish between the ugly outward forms of belief and the heart of particular religions he had come across. He wanted to know Gandhi's attitude to religion in general, and particularly towards Christianity.

"Even when I was eighteen, I came in touch with good Christians in London," said Gandhi. "Before that I had come in touch with what I used then to call 'beef and beer-bottle Christianity', for these were regarded as the indispensable criteria of a man becoming a Christian with also a third thing, namely, adoption of a European style of dress. Those Christians were parodying St. Paul's teaching, 'Call thou nothing unclean.' I went to London, therefore, with that prejudice against Christianity. I came across good Christians there who placed the Bible in my hands. Then I met many Christians in South Africa, and I have since grown to this belief that Christianity is as good and as true a religion as my own. For a time I struggled

with the question, 'Which was the true religion ?' But ultimately I came to the deliberate conviction that there was no such thing as only one true religion and every other false. There is no religion that is absolutely perfect. All are equally imperfect or more or less perfect, hence the conclusion that Christianity is as good and true as my own religion. But so also about Islam, Zoroastrianism or Judaism.

"I, therefore, do not take as literally true the text that Jesus is the only begotten son of God. God cannot be the exclusive father and I cannot ascribe exclusive divinity to Jesus. He is as divine as Krishna or Rama or Mahomed or Zoroaster. Similarly I do not regard every word of the Bible as the inspired word of God even as I do not regard every word of the Vedas or the Koran as inspired. The sum-total of each of these books is certainly inspired, but I miss that inspiration in many of the things taken individually. The Bible is as much a book of religion with me as the Gita and the Koran.

"Therefore, I am not interested in weaning you from Christianity and making you a Hindu, and I would not relish your designs upon me, if you had any, to convert me to Christianity. I would also dispute your claim that Christianity is the only true religion. It is also a true religion, a noble religion, and along with other religions it has contributed to raise the moral height of mankind. But it has yet to make a greater contribution. After all, what are 2,000 years in the life of a religion? Just now Christianity comes to yearning mankind in a tainted form. Fancy bishops supporting slaughter in the name of Christianity!"

"But," asked Dr. Crane, "when you say that all religions are true, what do you do when there are conflicting counsels?"

"I have no difficulty," said Gandhi, "in hitting upon the truth, because I go by certain fundamental maxims. Truth is superior to everything and I reject what conflicts with it. Similarly that which is in conflict with non-violence should be rejected. And on matters which can be reasoned out, that which conflicts with reason must also be rejected."

"In matters which can be reasoned out?" put in Dr. Crane.

Gandhi said: "Yes, there are subjects where reason cannot take us far and we have to accept things on faith. Faith then does not contradict reason but transcends it. Faith is a kind of sixth sense which works in cases which are without the purview of reason. Well then, given these three criteria, I can have no difficulty in examining all

claims made on behalf of religion. Thus to believe that Jesus is the only begotten son of God is to me against reason, for God can't marry and beget children. The word 'son' can only be used in a figurative sense. In that sense everyone who stands in the position of Jesus is a begotten son of God. If a man is spiritually miles ahead of us, we may say that he is in a special sense the son of God, though we are all children of God. We repudiate the relationship in our lives, whereas his life is a witness to that relationship."

"Then you will recognize degrees of divinity. Would you not say that Jesus was the most divine?"

"No, for the simple reason that we have no data. Historically we have more data about Mahomed than anyone else, because he was more recent in time. For Jesus, there is less data and still less for Buddha and Rama and Krishna; when we know so little about them, is it not preposterous to say that one of them was more divine than another? In fact, even if there were a great deal of data available, no judge should shoulder the burden of shifting all the evidence, if only for this reason that it requires a highly spiritual person to gauge the degree of divinity of the subjects he examines. To say that Jesus was ninety-nine per cent divine, and Mahomed fifty per cent, and Krishna ten per cent, is to arrogate to oneself a function which really does not belong to man."

"But," said Dr. Crane, "let us take a debatable point. Supposing I was debating between whether violence is justified or not. Islam would say one thing, Christianity another."

"Then I must decide with the help of the tests I have suggested."

"But does not Mahomed prescribe the use of the sword in certain circumstances?"

"I suppose most Muslims will agree. But I read religion in a different way. Khan Saheb Abdul Ghaffar Khan derives his belief in non-violence from the Koran, and the Bishop of London derives his belief in violence from the Bible. I derive my belief in non-violence from the Gita, whereas there are others who read violence in it. But if the worst came to the worst and if I came to the conclusion that the Koran teaches violence, I would still reject violence, but I would not say that the Bible is superior to the Koran or that Mahomed is inferior to Jesus. It is not my function to judge Mahomed and Jesus. It is enough that my non-violence is independent of the sanction of scriptures. But the fact remains that religious books have a

hold upon mankind which other books have not. They have made a greater impression on me than Mark Twain, or, to take a more appropriate instance, Emerson. Emerson was a thinker. Mahomed and Jesus were through and through men of action in a sense Emerson would never be. Their power was derived from their faith in God."

"I will take a concrete instance now to show what I mean," said Dr. Crane. "I was terribly shocked on Monday. I counted thirty-seven cows slain on the streets by the Muslims in the name of religion, and in offence to the Hindu sentiment. I asked the Hindu friend who travelled with me why the Muslims did so. He said it was part of their religion. 'Is it part of their spiritual growth?' I asked him. He said it was. I met a Muslim who said, 'We both please God and ourselves.' Now here was a Muslim revelling in a thing that outrages you and me too. Do you think all this is counter to the Koran?"

"I do indeed," said Gandhi, and referred Dr. Crane to the article he had written only last week. "Just as many Hindu practices—for example, untouchability—are no part of Hindu religion, and I say that cow slaughter is no part of Islam. But I do not wrestle with the Muslims who believe that it is part of Islam."

"What about a man who says that he is commanded by God to do violence?"

"There you would not put another God before him. You need not disturb his religion, but you will disturb his reason."

"But take Hitler. He says he is carrying out God's behest in persecuting the Jews and killing his opponents."

"You will not pit one word of God against another word of God. But you will have to bear down his reason. For him you will have to produce a miracle which you will do when Christians will learn the art of dying without killing in defence of what they hold dearer than religion. But we can go on arguing like this endlessly. And then I may tell you that you are talking against time." With this remark Gandhi looked at his watch, and the interview ended.

Critics chastised him for wasting his time and energy over spiritual matters and ethical problems. "I do not divide life into water-tight compartments," Gandhi said. "The life of a nation, like that of individuals is an indivisible whole. My retirement from the Congress or political life so called does not mean the slightest diminution in my yearning for India's complete independence, nor is civil disobedience any distinct process of non-violence. It is one of the many non-violent

processes which are in no way inconsistent with one another. What I have to do is to give a clear demonstration of non-violence in all my actions. I claim to be conducting my experiment in a scientific spirit. In the garden of non-violence are many plants. They are all from the same parent. They may not be all used simultaneously. Some are less powerful than others. All are harmless. But they have to be handled skilfully. I am applying such skill to their use as God has given me. But because I use one plant rather than another at any time, it does not follow that I give up the fight. It is the fight to the finish. Defeat has no place in the dictionary of non-violence."

In February the full results of the general elections were out. The Congress secured an overwhelming victory at the polls, and was returned as a majority party in six out of the eleven provinces and as the largest single party in all. The significance of the Congress total of 715 seats was the more marked because out of the nominal total of 1,585 seats, there were in reality only 657 seats open to general competition and not earmarked for some special section.

The Congress secured absolute majorities in Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa. In Assam it was the strongest party with 35 seats out of 108. The striking result was in Madras where the Justice or anti-Brahmin Party, which had been in unbroken control of the legislature since 1922, obtained only 21 seats in the lower house against the Congress' 159. In the predominantly Muslim Frontier Province, Congress candidates were elected to 15 of the 36 seats reserved for Muslims, while the Muslim League was not able to win a single seat. In Bengal the Congress won 60 seats out of 250. In the Punjab the Congress won only 18 seats out of 175 and in Sind 8 out of 60. The Liberal Party was wiped out, the Democratic Swaraj Party opposed the Congress without success. The Hindu Mahasabha failed completely. The Muslim League did better but on the whole its showing was poor, especially in the predominantly Muslim provinces,—only four per cent voted for Jinnah and his League. In the Punjab and Sind, the League failed completely; in Bengal it met with only partial success.

The Congress victory made a very profound impression in Britain. *The Times* was compelled to abandon its treatment of the Congress as an "insignificant minority" and wrote: "The elections have shown that the Congress Party alone is organized on more than a provincial basis. Its record of success has been impressive and, though it

owes much to its excellent organization and to the divisions and lack of organization of the more conservative elements, these factors alone do not explain its numerous victories. The party's proposals have been more positive and more constructive than those of its opponents. The party has won its victories on issues which interested millions of Indian rural voters and scores of millions who had no votes."

At the end of February the Working Committee met at Wardha. The resolution congratulating the nation on its response to the call of the Congress said: "The committee realizes the high responsibility with which the nation has charged it, and it calls upon the Congress organization and, in particular, the newly elected Congress members of the legislature to remember always this trust and responsibility, to uphold Congress ideals and principles, to be true to the faith of the people, and to labour unceasingly as soldiers of swaraj for the freedom of the motherland and the emancipation of her suffering and exploited millions."

The committee declared that the primary allegiance of Congressmen, as well as all other Indians, was to the Indian people, and the oath of allegiance, in order to enable participation in the work of the legislatures, did not affect in any way this primary duty and allegiance. The Working Committee reminded all Congress legislators that their sphere of activities was not confined to the legislatures but included their constituencies. "All effective work in the legislatures must have the sanction of the people behind it and, therefore, all work in the legislatures must be co-ordinated with Congress activity outside."

Congress policy in the legislatures was: "The Congress adheres to its general and basic policy of non-co-operation with the apparatus of British imperialism except in so far as circumstances may require a variation. The object of the Congress is Complete Independence and to that end its activities are directed. The immediate objective of the Congress is to fight the new constitution and lay stress on the nation's demand for a constituent assembly. Congress members of the legislatures must remember the Congress policy of not assisting or co-operating with any function or activity, calculated to enhance the power or prestige of British imperialism in India. Ceremonial, official, or social functions of this kind must, therefore, be avoided and no Congress member should take part in them. No Congress members of the legislatures may accept a title given by the British

Government. The Congress Party in each provincial assembly must act as a disciplined body, leaders of which will represent the party in any conversations with Government and other group. All members will be expected to be in their places in the assemblies during the session and when the party is attending. Congress members of the legislatures shall be dressed in khadi. Congress parties in the provincial assemblies must not enter into any alliances with other groups in the assembly without the permission of the Working Committee. Congress members should press for the carrying out of the Congress programme as enunciated in the election manifesto and its agrarian resolution. Under the existing act with all its safeguards and special powers in the hands of the Viceroy or the Governor, and its protection of the services, the deadlocks are inevitable. They should not be avoided when they occur while pursuing Congress policy."

Gandhi participated in the Working Committee discussions but *Harijan* still adhered to its policy of dealing only with non-political matters. There were articles on untouchability, national language, malaria, and married brahmacharya. Under "A Voice in Wilderness", Gandhi wrote:

"The use of the contraceptives is infinitely more tempting than the whisky bottle. But it is no more lawful than the sparkling liquid for its fatal temptation. Nor can opposition to the use of either be given up in despair, because their use seems to be growing. If the opponents have faith in their mission, it has to be pursued. A voice in the wilderness has a potency which voices uttered in the midst of 'the madding crowd' lack. For the voice in the wilderness has meditation, deliberation and unquenchable faith behind it, whilst the babel of voices has generally nothing but the backing of the experience of personal enjoyment or the false and sentimental pity for the unwanted children and their suffering mothers. Argument of personal experience has as much weight as an act of a drunkard. The argument of pity is a trap into which it is dangerous to fall. Sufferings of the unwanted children and of equally unwanted motherhood are punishments or warnings devised by beneficent nature. Disregard of the law of discipline and restraint is suicide. Ours is a state of probation. If we refuse to bear the yoke of discipline, we court failure like cowards, we avoid battle and give up the only joy of living."

He avoided politics in his writings and talks. When the Egyptian deputation from Al Azaar University visited Segaon, they discussed

the ways and means of cementing the relations between India and Egypt. "I should heartily welcome co-operation," said Gandhi. "We should invite professors from Egypt and you should invite those from India, so that we may develop cultural contacts." Two Negroes, Dr. Tobias and Dr. Mays, followed the Egyptians. To them Gandhi explained his weapon of non-violence.

"Passive resistance," he remarked, "is a misnomer for non-violent resistance. It is much more active than violent resistance. It is direct and ceaseless, but three-fourths invisible and only one-fourth visible. In its visibility it seems to be ineffective, for example, the spinning wheel which I have called the symbol of non-violence. In its visibility it appears ineffective, but it is really intensely active and most effective in the ultimate result. This knowledge enables me to detect the flaws in the way in which the votaries of non-violence are doing their spinning. I ask for more vigilance and more untiredness. Non-violence is an intensely active force when properly understood and used. A violent man's activity is most visible, while it lasts. But it is always transitory. Hitler and Mussolini on the one hand and Stalin on the other are able to show immediate effectiveness of violence. But it will be as transitory as that of Jhenghis' slaughter. But the effects of Buddha's non-violent action persist and are likely to grow with age. And the more it is practised, the more effective and inexhaustible it becomes, and ultimately the whole world stands agape and exclaims, 'a miracle has happened.' All miracles are due to the silent and effective working of invisible forces. Non-violence is the most invisible and the most effective."

"I have no doubt in my own mind about the superiority of non-violence," said Professor Mays. "But the thing that bothers me is about its exercise on a large scale, the difficulty of so disciplining the mass mind on the point of love. It is easier to discipline individuals. What should be the strategy when they break out? Do we retreat or do we go on?"

"I have had that experience," said Gandhi, "in the course of our movement here. People do not gain the training by preaching. Non-violence cannot be preached. It has to be practised. The practice of violence can be taught to people by outward symbols. You shoot at boards, then at targets, and then at beasts. Then you are passed as an expert in the art of destruction. The non-violent man has no outward weapon and, therefore, not only his speech but his action

also seems ineffective. I may say all kinds of sweet words to you without meaning them. On the other hand, I may have real love in me and yet my outward expression may be forbidding. Then outwardly my action in both cases may be the same and yet the effect may be different. For, the effect of our action is often more potent when it is not patently known. Thus the unconscious effect you are making on me I may never know. It is, nevertheless, infinitely greater than the conscious effect. In violence, there is nothing invisible. But non-violence, on the other hand, is three-fourths invisible, and hence the effect is in the inverse ratio to its invisibility. Non-violence, when it becomes active, travels with extraordinary velocity, and then it becomes a miracle. So the mass mind is affected first unconsciously and then consciously. When it becomes consciously affected there is demonstrable victory. In my own experience, when people seemed to be weakening there was no consciousness of defeat in me. Thus I was fuller of hope in the efficacy of non-violence after the renunciation of civil disobedience in 1922, and today I continue to be in the same hopeful mood. It is not a mere emotional thing. Supposing I saw no signs of dawn coming, I should not lose faith. Everything has to come in its proper time.

"I have discussions here with my co-workers about the scavenging work we are doing. 'Why can't we do it after swaraj?' they say. 'We may do it better after swaraj.' I say to them, 'No'. The reform has to come today, it must not wait for swaraj; in fact, the right type of swaraj will come only out of such work.' I cannot show you, as perhaps I cannot show some of my co-workers, the connection between swaraj and scavenging. If I have to win swaraj non-violently I must discipline my people. The maimed and the blind and the leprous cannot join the army of violence. There is an age limit for serving in the army. For a non-violent struggle, there is no age limit; the blind and the maimed and the bed-ridden may serve, and not only men but women also. When the spirit of non-violence pervades the people and begins to work, its effect is visible to all.

"But now comes your poser. There are people, you say, who do not believe in non-violence, as you do. Are you to sit quiet? The friends ask: 'If not now, when will you act?' I say in reply: 'I may not succeed in my lifetime, but my faith that victory can only come through non-violence is stronger than ever'. When I spoke on the cult of the spinning wheel at Faizpur, a newspaper correspondent

imputed astuteness to me. Nothing could be further from my mind. When I came to Segaon I was told the people might not co-operate and might even boycott me. I said: 'That may be. But this is the way non-violence works. If I go to a village which is still farther off, the experiment may work better. This thing has come in my search after the technique of non-violence. Each day that passes makes my faith brighter. I have come here to bring that faith to fruition and to die in the process, if that is God's will. Non-violence to be worth anything has to work in the face of hostile forces. But there may be action in inaction. Action may be worse than inaction.'"

In the third week of March, Gandhi proceeded to Delhi to attend the A.-I.C.C. Opinion within the Congress leadership was sharply divided on the question of office acceptance. The right-wing leaders maintained that by forming ministries the Congress could improve its position in the fight against the new constitution. Nehru, Bose and the left-wing groups were opposed to taking office. After two days' discussion, the A.-I.C.C. adopted Gandhi's compromise formula by a vote of 127 to 70. The resolution authorized the acceptance of the offices in the provinces where the Congress commanded a majority in the legislature, provided that "the ministership shall not be accepted unless the leader of the Congress Party in the legislature is satisfied and able to state publicly that the Governor will not use his special powers of interference or set aside the office of ministers in regard to their constitutional activities."

On March 19, the convention of the Congress members of the provincial legislatures met at Delhi to pledge: "I, a member of this all-India convention, pledge myself to the service of India and to work in the legislatures and outside, for the independence of India and the ending of exploitation and poverty of her people. I pledge myself to work under the discipline of the Congress for the furtherance of the Congress ideals and objectives to the end that India may be free and independent and her millions freed from the heavy burdens they suffer from."

Nehru administered the oath in Hindustani. Addressing the convention, he stated: "No one likes conflict and obstruction, and we have hungered so long for real opportunities for serving our people through constructive effort. They cry aloud for succour, these unhappy millions of our countrymen, and even when their voices are silent, their dumb eyes are eloquent with appeal. It is difficult to live

in this country surrounded by this human desolation and misery unspoken often and harder to bear because of that. We talk of swaraj and independence, but in human terms it means relief to the masses from their unutterable sorrow and misery. Ultimately all that we work for resolve itself into that."

Gandhi went to Madras to attend the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan held on March 26. In his address at the convocation, he observed: "Gujarati, I said to myself, cannot be the language. Not more than a thirtieth part of the people of the country speaks Gujarati. How am I to find Tulsi Ramayana therein? What about Marathi, then, I wondered. I love Marathi and I claim among the Marathi-speaking people some staunch co-workers. I know Maharashtrians' efficiency, their capacity for self-sacrifice, and their learning. And yet I did not think that Marathi, the language that Lokamanya Tilak wielded so wonderfully well, could be our *rashtrabhasha*. When I was thus reasoning this out, let me tell you that I did not know the actual number of people speaking Hindi, and yet I instinctively felt that only Hindi could take that place, and no other. Did I not appreciate Bengali? I did, and I thought highly of it, as the language of Chaitanya, Ram Mohun Roy, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore. And yet I felt that we could not make even Bengali the language of inter-provincial intercourse. Could any of the South Indian languages become the *rashtrabhasha*? Not that I was wholly ignorant of them. I made, while in South African jails, a desperate attempt to learn Tamil. Pope's *Tamil Handbook* captivated me, but alas I was released before my time and could not out of jail give any time to Tamil. But, how could Tamil or any other South Indian language be the *rashtrabhasha*? Hindi, otherwise and later known as Hindustani or even Urdu, and written in Devanagari or Urdu script, could be and was the only possible common medium."

Along with the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan there was the session of the Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad. In the course of his presidential address to it, Gandhi said:

"The object of this conference is to collect gems from all provincial literatures and to make them available through Hindi. For this purpose I would make an appeal to you. Of course, everyone must know his own language thoroughly well, and should also know the great literature of other Indian languages through Hindi. But it is the object of this conference to stimulate in our people the desire to know

languages of other provinces. I tell you from experience that it is not at all difficult to pick up another Indian language. But to this end a common script is quite essential. It is not difficult to achieve it in Tamil Nad. For, look at this simple fact. Over ninety per cent of our people are illiterate. We have to start with a clean slate with them. Why should we not start making them literate by means of a common script? In Europe, they have tried the experiment of a common script quite successfully. Some people even go to the length of saying that we might adopt the Roman script. After a good deal of controversy, there is a consensus of opinion that the common script can be Devanagari and none else. Urdu is claimed as a rival, but I think neither Urdu nor Roman has the perfection and the phonetic capacity of Devanagari. Please remember that I say nothing against your languages. Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada must be there and will be there. But why not teach the illiterate in these parts these languages through the Devanagari script? In the interest of national unity we desire to achieve, the adoption of Devanagari as a common script is so essential. Here it is a question of just shedding our provincialism and narrowness, there are no difficulties at all. Not that I do not like Tamil or Urdu scripts. I know both. But service of motherland, to which all my life is being given and without which life would be insupportable for me, has taught me that we should try to lift unnecessary burdens from our people. The burden of knowing many scripts is unnecessary and easily avoidable. I would appeal to men of letters of all provinces to resolve their difference on this point and be agreed on this matter of prime importance."

In conclusion he said: "Today our literature is the interest of the few—of the few literates. Even among the literates there would be few who are really interested in literature. We have not entered the villages at all. In Segaon, not one per cent of the people can read literature. In our night class less than half a dozen people come even to listen to the newspaper regularly. We have to tackle this immense task of fighting this ignorance. How shall we do it with a handful of people? We want the co-operation of all. I am not fond of literature for its own sake. I do not make a fetish of literacy either. Literacy must be one of the many means for intellectual development, but we have had in the past intellectual giants who were unlettered. That is why we have confined ourselves only to literature of the cleanest and healthiest kind. How can we have this, unless we have your hearty

co-operation and unless you are prepared to select suitable literature of your respective languages?"

At Gandhi's suggestion, a resolution recommending the Congress to carry on its proceedings in Hindi-Hindustani was passed: "This conference appeals to the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress to resolve not to use English in future in the proceedings of the Congress, the A.-I.C.C., and the Working Committee, and to use Hindi-Hindustani instead, provided that those who are not able to express themselves fully in Hindi-Hindustani may use English. If a member who is unable to express himself in Hindi-Hindustani desires to speak in his provincial language, he may do so, and arrangements may be made for translating such a speech into Hindi-Hindustani. If any person finds it necessary on any occasion to speak in English to make himself understood by any section of the audience, he may do so with the permission of the chairman."

Gandhi explained the resolution as follows:

"If the Congress went on as usual while we passed resolutions in support of Hindi as the common language, our work would be painfully slow. This resolution appeals to the Congress to exclude the use of English as a language of inter-provincial communication. English, it says, should not be allowed to take either the place of the provincial languages or of Hindi. If English had not ousted the languages of the people, the provincial languages would have been wonderfully rich today. If England had adopted French as the language of her national deliberations we should have had no English literature today. French was the language there after the Norman conquest. But then the tide turned in favour of 'English undefiled'. That created the great English literature we know. What Yakub Husain Saheb said was quite right. The Muslim contact had a great influence on our culture and civilization so much so that there were men like the late Pandit Ajodhyanath who were perfect scholars in Persian and Arabic. If they had given to their mother tongue all the time that they gave to the study of Arabic and Persian, the mother tongue would have made great progress. Then English came to occupy the unnatural position it does until this day. The professors can wax eloquent in English but will not be able to express their thoughts in their own mother tongue. Sir C. V. Raman's researches are all contained in his papers in English. They are a sealed book to those who do not know English. Look at the position in Russia. Even before the revolution

they resolved to have all their text-books, including the scientific, in Russian. That really prepared the way for Lenin's revolution. We cannot establish real mass contacts until the Congress decides to have all its deliberations in Hindi and of its provincial organizations in the provincial languages.

"It is not that I am making a fetish of language. It is not that I would refuse to have swaraj, if I could have it at the cost of our own language, as indeed I should refuse to have it at the cost of truth and non-violence. But I insist so much on the language, because it is a powerful means of achieving national unity, and the more firmly it is established, the broader based will be our unity.

"Don't be alarmed at my proposal of everyone learning Hindi plus a language of other provinces, besides his mother tongue. Languages are easily learnt. Max Müller knew fourteen languages; and I know a German girl who knew eleven languages when she came here five years ago, and now knows two or three Indian languages. But you have created before your mind's eye a bugbear and somehow feel that you cannot express yourselves in Hindi. It is our mental laziness that we have made no progress, in spite of Hindustani being adopted in our Congress constitution these twelve years.

"Yakub Husain Saheb asked me why I insisted so much on Hindi-Hindustani and was not content with having simple Hindustani as the common language. I must take you through the genesis of the whole thing. It was as early as 1918, that as president of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, I asked the Hindi-speaking world to broaden their definition of Hindi to include Urdu. When I presided over the *sammelan* once again in 1935, I had the word Hindi properly defined as a language that was spoken both by the Hindus and Musalmans and written in Devanagari or in Urdu script. My object in doing so was to include in Hindi the high-flown Urdu of Maulana Shibli and the high-flown Hindi of Pandit Shyamsunderdas. Then came the Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad, also an offshoot of the *sammelan*. At my suggestion the name Hindi-Hindustani was adopted, in the place of Hindi. Abdul Huq Saheb stoutly opposed me there. I could not accept his suggestion. I should have done violence to myself and to the *sammelan*, if I had given up the word Hindi which was the word of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan and which I had persuaded them to define so as to include Urdu. We must remember that the word Hindi is not of Hindu coinage, but it was coined after the Muslim

advent to describe the language which Hindus of the North spoke and studied. So many Musalman writers of note have described their language as Hindi. And why this quarrel over words when Hindi is defined to include the variations spoken and written by Hindus and Musalmans?

"Then there is one more factor to be considered. So far as South Indian languages are concerned, it is only Hindi with a large number of Sanskrit words that can appeal to them, because they are familiar with a certain number of Sanskrit words and the Sanskrit sound. When these two—Hindi and Hindustani or Urdu—amalgamate and really become the all-India language, daily augmented by the introduction of the provincial words, we shall have a vocabulary richer even than the English vocabulary. I hope you now understand why I insist on Hindi-Hindustani.

"And then I would give a tip to such of you as dread the advent of Hindi-Hindustani as the only language of the Congress. Invest in a Hindi daily or a good book, read aloud part of it regularly even for five minutes, select passages from well-known Hindi writings and speeches, and repeat them to yourselves for correct intonation, make a point of learning a few Hindi words every day, and I assure you that such regular practice will be enough to enable you to express yourselves well in Hindi-Hindustani in six months' time and without putting an undue strain on your memory."

During the last week of March, the Governors invited the leaders of the Congress majorities to accept appointment as premiers and to form their own cabinets. Each Governor was asked to give his presumptive premier an assurance, drafted by Gandhi, which the latter might make public, in the following identical terms, "that in regard to the constitutional activities of his ministers His Excellency will not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of the cabinet." These assurances not having been given, the leaders expressed their inability to undertake the formation of ministries.

The majority party having refused office, a deadlock ensued in six provinces, and the Governors appointed *ad interim* ministers who had no backing in the legislatures. The legislatures themselves were not summoned, as this would have inevitably led to the defeat of the *ad interim* ministries and as harpening of the conflict.

Over the subject of assurances, a long public controversy ensued in which Gandhi marked his reappearance in active politics. Legal

opinion in India and England began to range itself on opposite sides. Tej Bahadur Sapru considered the Congress demand as unreasonable, while Professor Keith sided with Gandhi and the Congress. The first shot was fired by Lord Lothian. Broadcasting from London on the new Indian constitution, he declared that the Governors clearly could not undertake not to use special powers. "The correct constitutional course," he said, "is for the Congress when it has a majority, to assume office, formulate its programme of reform and advise, Governors, that they are prepared to assume the responsibility for the consequences of its policy. Then it will be for Governors to decide whether they will accept the advice or not, and so long as a ministry is prepared to accept the responsibility for the consequences of its policy, it will be most difficult for the Governor not to follow the advice, because to reject it might be a greater menace to peace and tranquillity than to accept it."

On March 30, Gandhi came out with a statement, issued from Madras, analysing the deadlock. Confessing himself as the author of the office acceptance clause in the Congress resolution, he said:

"My desire was not to lay down any impossible condition. On the contrary, I wanted to devise a condition that could be easily accepted by Governors. There was no intention whatsoever to lay down a condition whose acceptance would mean any slightest abrogation of the constitution. Congressmen were well aware that they could not, and would not, ask for any such amendment.

"Congress policy was, and is, not to secure an amendment but an absolute ending of the constitution which nobody likes. Congressmen were and are also aware that they could not end it by mere acceptance of the office, even conditional. The object of that section of the Congress which believed in office acceptance was, pending the creation by means consistent with the Congress creed of non-violence, of a situation that would transfer all power to the people, to work in offices so as to strengthen the Congress, which has been shown predominantly to represent mass opinion.

"I felt that this object could not be secured unless there was a gentlemanly understanding between Governors and their Congress ministers that they would not exercise their special powers of interference so long as ministers acted within the constitution. Not to do so would be to court an almost immediate deadlock after entering upon office. I felt that honesty demanded that understanding. It is

common cause that Governors have discretionary powers. Surely here was nothing extra-constitutional in their saying that they would not exercise their discretion against ministers carrying on constitutional activities. It may be remembered that the understanding was not to touch numerous other safeguards over which Governors had no power. A strong party with a decisive backing of the electorate could not be expected to put itself in the precarious position of the interference at will of Governors.

"The question may be put in another way. Should Governors be courteous to ministers or discourteous? I hold that it would be distinctly discourteous, if they interfered with their ministers in matters over which the law gave the ministers full control and with which Governors were under no obligation to interfere. Any self-respecting minister conscious of an absolute majority at his back could not but demand an assurance of non-interference. Have I not heard Sir Samuel Hoare and the other ministers saying in so many words that ordinarily Governors would not use their admittedly large powers of interference? I claim that the Congress formula asked for nothing more. It has been claimed on behalf of the British Government that the act gives autonomy to the provinces. If that is so, it is not the Governors but ministers who are during their period of office responsible for the wise administration of their provinces. Responsible ministers sensible of their duty could not submit to interference in pursuance of their daily duty.

"It does appear to me that once more the British Government has broken to the heart what it has promised to the ear. I do not doubt that that they can and will impose their will on the people till the latter develop enough strength from within to resist it but that cannot be called working provincial autonomy. By flouting the majority obtained through the machinery of their creation, they have in plain language ended the autonomy which they claim the constitution has given to the provinces. The rule, therefore, will now be the rule of the sword, not of the pen, nor of the indisputable majority.

"Any way that is the only interpretation which, with all the goodwill in the world, I can put upon the Government action. For, I believe in the cent per cent honesty of my formula, whose acceptance might have prevented a crisis and resulted on the natural, orderly and peaceful transference of power from the bureaucracy to the largest and fullest democracy known to the world."

April 1, the day of inauguration of the act, was marked all over India as a day of protest against "a new charter of slavery". Hartal was observed and the following resolution was passed from the Congress platforms all over India: "This meeting reiterates the opinion of the people of India that the Government of India Act of 1935 has been designed to perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the Indian people and to strengthen the hold of British imperialism on India. This meeting declares that the Indian people do not recognize the right of any external power or authority to dictate the political and economic structure of India. The Indian people can only accept a constitutional structure which has been framed by them and which is based on the independence of India as a nation, and which allows them full scope for development according to their needs and desire. They stand for a genuine democratic state in India, where political power has been transferred to the people of India as a whole, and the Government is under their effective control. Such a state can only be created by the Indian people themselves and through the medium of a constituent assembly, elected by adult suffrage and having power to determine finally the constitution of the country. This meeting, therefore, condemns and utterly rejects the new constitution and demands its withdrawal in accordance with the declared will of the Indian people."

During the next three months, statements and counter-statements were issued on behalf of the Congress and the Government. Lord Lothian, a member of the Round Table Conference, who had been closely connected with the framing of the new act, took a prominent part in the controversy. He wrote in *The Times* that the use of the "safeguards" would in practice be controlled by the public opinion. In the history of responsible government, he said, the Governor's decision to differ from his minister depended on whether they could count on the support of the electorate in the event of a dissolution. If they could, "the Governor has usually decided not to provoke a constitutional crisis of which there is no solution save suspension of normal functioning of the constitution."

Lord Zetland, Secretary of State for India, in reply to a question by Lord Lothian, in the House of Lords, said: "Mr. Gandhi's statement, dated March 30, was so astonishing that it appeared to be explicable only on the assumption that either he had never read the act and the instrument of instructions or the report of the select

committee, or that, if he had done so, he had completely forgotten, when he made his statement, the provisions embodied in this document, respecting the special responsibilities vested in the Governors. It was all the more unfortunate that he should have made such a statement, for large numbers in India were accustomed to accept any statement made by Mr. Gandhi as necessarily correct." In the House of Commons Mr. Attlee, a Labour Member, also received a similar reply from Mr. Butler.

As the controversy took a legal turn, as to whether the assurances demanded could or could not be given under the new act, Gandhi, on behalf of the Congress, proposed that the matter be referred to an impartial tribunal for decision. "I want the right to prevail," he said. "There is here no question of diplomacy with India. It is a question of life and death." In a telegram to *The Times* dated Wardha, April 14, Gandhi wrote:

"In the teeth of first-class legal opinion to the contrary, I regard Lord Zetland's interpretation as unacceptable. The refusal to submit his interpretation to an examination by a legal tribunal will raise a strong presumption that the British Government has no intention of dealing fairly by the majority party whose advanced programme they dislike. I would prefer an honourable deadlock to the dishonourable daily scenes between the Congress and the Governors. For, in the sense the British Government mean, the working of the act by the Congress seems impossible. It is, therefore, for the British Government to show to the Congress by every means open within their own constitution that the Congress can advance towards its goal even by taking office. I wish everyone concerned to believe me that with me there is no question whatsoever of false prestige. My function is that of a mediator between the Congress and the Government which, unlike many Congressmen, I believe to be capable of being converted under moral pressure as it is being coerced under physical pressure."

The Government remained adamant. The Working Committee which met in Allahabad in April reiterated its position: "The past record of the British Government as well as its present attitude show that without specific assurances as required by the Congress, popular ministers will be unable to function properly and without irritating interference. The assurances do not contemplate abrogation of the right of the Governor to dismiss the ministry or dissolve provincial

assembly when any serious difference of opinion arise between the Governor and his ministers. But this committee has grave objection to ministers having to submit to interference by the Governor with the alternative of themselves having to resign their office instead of the Governors taking the responsibility of dismissing them."

As the controversy proceeded, there was a slight toning down by interpretations of the original demand for the assurances on behalf of the Congress. The Government changed their ground by slow degrees and finally took the position that, though a definite assurance in terms of the Congress resolution could not be given, the essence of provincial autonomy, as evisaged in the new constitution, was the co-operation of Governor with his ministers.

The position of the *ad interim* ministries was becoming more and more difficult. As they could not face the legislature, the legislature was not summoned in spite of repeated demands from the elected members. But it had to be summoned within first six months and the budget had to be passed. This deepening crisis led to the largest advance on the part of the Government, but this advance was accompanied by a broad hint from Lord Linlithgow that if the Congress majorities persisted in their refusal to accept office, the constitution would be suspended under section 93 of the act in those provinces where the Congress commanded a majority. As to the question of the dismissal or resignation of ministers, he argued in favour of the latter as being more in accordance with the constitutional precedent and with ministry's self-respect. But he accepted Gandhi's suggestion that "it is only when the issue between a Governor and his minister constitutes a serious disagreement that any question of the severing of their partnership need arise."

The Viceroy's statement led to the ending of the deadlock. The Working Committee declared at its meeting in Wardha, on July 8, that while the declarations on behalf of the British Government exhibited a desire to make an approach to the Congress demand, they fell short of the assurances asked for in terms of the A.-I.C.C. resolution. Nevertheless, the committee felt that the situation created as a result of the circumstances, and the events that had occurred since the Congress demand was put forward, warranted the belief that it would not be easy for the Governors to use their special powers. The committee, therefore, resolved that the Congressmen be permitted to accept office. But it further added that it wished to make it clear that

office was to be accepted and utilized for the purpose of working in accordance with the lines laid down in the Congress manifesto, and to further in every way the Congress policy of combating the new act on the one hand and of prosecuting the constructive programme on the other.

Within a few days, the leaders of the Congress parties in the six provinces were invited to form cabinets. Congress ministries were formed in Bombay, Madras, the United Provinces, Bihar, the Central Provinces and Orissa. Soon after, the access of a group of eight non-Congress members in the Frontier Province to cooperate with the Congress and acceptance of Congress discipline, gave the Congress an absolute majority there, leading to the formation of a Congress ministry. Thus the Congress ministries were established in seven of the eleven provinces. In Bengal, the Congress had the largest single party in the legislature, but as it was not in the majority, it did not enter the government.

"Acceptance of office," said Nehru, "does not mean by an iota acceptance of the slave constitution. It means fight against the coming of federation by all means in our power, inside as well as outside the legislatures. We have taken a new step involving new responsibilities and some risk. But if we are true to our objectives and are ever vigilant, we shall overcome these risks and gain strength and power from this step also. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

Grow With Me

1937

WHILE THE controversy over the office acceptance was raging in the country, the annual meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh was held in April, at Hudli, a small village in Belgaum district. The camp was pitched in the midst of a mango grove, in temporary sheds, made of *jowari* stalks. The sangh members worked on the paving of village roads in co-operation with the villagers. Gandhi inaugurated the digging of a public well.

In his opening speech, Gandhi dispelled the misunderstanding that some members harboured in their hearts with regard to the sangh *vis-a-vis* the Congress. Some wag had remarked that if Faizpur was Jawaharlal's Congress, Hudli was going to be Gandhi's Congress.

"The joke would seem to suggest," Gandhi said, "that the Gandhi Seva Sangh and the Congress were rival organizations. How could the sangh be opposed to the Congress, when it was conceived only to carry out the constructive programme of the Congress? It purely is an offshoot of the Congress. The Congress is an ever-growing body trying to represent more and more people in the country. It rightly claims to represent three hundred million people. The sangh represents no one. It may be said to represent truth and non-violence, to the extent that the members carry out those principles in their lives. A member of the Gandhi Seva Sangh thus represents no one but himself, whereas a member of the Congress represents millions. Moreover most members of the sangh are members of the Congress. Whoever, therefore, started the joke started an untruth, and no one should have allowed currency to it.

"But that makes me wonder, why the name of the sangh should not be changed. You have associated my name with it because you are all pledged to truth and non-violence to which I am pledged. The Congress programme of 1920-1 was based on truth and non-violence and you are pledged to carry it out. My faith in it today is

brighter than ever but supposing it grows dim, what will you do? Will you then forsake the programme? Do you independently believe in the programme or because I believe in it? If it is the former, the sangh need not be named after me; if it is the latter, you are worshippers of a person and not of a principle. And I may tell you that the worship of a person far from elevating one lowers one. That you accepted the principles, perhaps at my instance, does not matter in the least. You accepted them, because they appealed to your reason and your heart, and because you assimilated them. If you have not assimilated them, they are of no use, even as ill-digested and unassimilated food is useless and even harmful. Ill-digested principles are, if anything, worse than ill-digested food, for the latter harms the body and there is a cure for it, whereas the former ruins the soul and there is no cure for it.

"I would, therefore, appeal to you all to consider my suggestion. That you should invite me to take part in your deliberations is quite proper. You have to question and cross-question me, test my faith and find out if my faith burns as bright as ever, and if the voice that spoke in 1920 still rings true. I may tell you that I am constantly evolving, and the application of my principles is ever widening. You have to find out, if the evolution is on proper lines. You cannot do all this, if you will not think of these things independently of me, and there is every danger of our being exposed to ridicule, if you cling to my name.

"Then there is another and a much graver risk. There is the danger of your sangh deteriorating into a sect. Whenever there is any difficulty you will turn to my writings in *Young India* and *Harijan*, and swear by them. As a matter of fact, my writings should be cremated with my body. What I have done will endure, not what I have said and written. I have often said recently that even if all our scriptures were to perish, that one mantra of *Ishopanishad* was enough to declare the essence of Hinduism, but even that one verse will be of no avail if there is no one to live it. Even so, what I have said and written is useful only to the extent that it has helped you to assimilate the great principles of truth and non-violence. If you have not assimilated them, my writings will be of no use to you. I say this to you as a satyagrahi meaning every word of it.

"And I want you to face the problems that will come before you this week in the spirit of what I have said. My faith in truth and

non-violence is ever growing, and as I am ever trying to follow them in my life, I too am growing every moment. I see new implications about them, I see them in a newer light every day and read in them a new meaning. That is why I am constantly placing new proposals before the Spinners' Association, the Harijan Sevak Sangh and the Village Industries Association. That does not mean that I am unsettled or unbalanced; that means that those are living organizations and must ever grow, even as a tree is ever growing. I want you also to grow with me. I should not care to know what happens after I am gone, but I wish that your organization may never be a stagnant pool but an ever-growing tree. Forget me, therefore; my name is an unnecessary adjunct to the name of the sangh; cleave not to my name but cleave to the principles, measure every one of your activities by that standard and face fearlessly every problem that arises."

The important question mooted by Kishorlal G. Mashruwala, the sangh president, namely, whether those who went to the legislatures might be members of the sangh or not, provoked a warm discussion. Opinion seemed to be sharply divided. Vallabhbhai Patel favoured a permissive resolution, but Rajendra Prasad and Mashruwala were inclined to the contrary view. The question was discussed from different points of view. Could a body of workers pledged to the constructive programme think of going to the legislatures? The sangh originated from the no-change programme of the Congress, could the members now themselves go to the legislatures? Was not the wrecking programme a denial of truth and non-violence? For two days the question was debated. Gandhi, who had an open mind until the last, encouraged everyone to express his views. And at last he gave his own point of view:

"The boycott of the legislatures, let me tell you, is not an eternal principle like that of truth or non-violence. My opposition to them has considerably lessened, but that does not mean that I am going back on my former position. The question is purely one of strategy, and I can only say what is most needed at a particular moment. Am I the non-co-operator I was in 1920? Yes, I am the same non-co-operator. But it is forgotten that I was a co-operator too in the sense that I non-co-operated for co-operation, and even then I said if I could carry the country forward by co-operation I should co-operate. I have now advised going to the legislatures not to offer co-operation but to demand co-operation.

"If what Premabehn said was seriously meant, I must tell her that my experience is quite to the contrary. I am quite sure that no one would have cared for my politics, if I was not pledged to truth and non-violence. Truth was instinctive with me, and non-violence came later. At school I was a dunce and I began my legal career as a second-rate lawyer. My clients in South Africa were not at all impressed with my legal talent, but when they saw that I would not under any circumstances swerve from truth, they clung to me. When I came to India and began taking an active part in the affairs of the country, it was neither my politics nor my intellect that appealed to the country. In Champaran people did not know the name of the Congress and neither my colleagues, Rajendra Babu and Brajkishore Babu, nor I ever took the name of the Congress before them. Premabehn says that the people in Saswad, where she works, do not understand truth or non-violence but understand swaraj. I join issue there and say in spite of her that they do not know what is swaraj. They understand untouchability, they understand the spinning wheel, but not pure politics. I am quite sure that they do not care for the legislatures either. What they are concerned with is whether you can get them bread or a bushel of wheat. In Champaran you could indeed get thousands to vote for the Congress because of the work that was done there without bothering them with politics or the name of the Congress.

"If any of you here share her view that truth and non-violence are meaningless apart from politics, I tell you that truth and non-violence are the almighty entities independent of ephemeral things like politics. Those politics are nothing worth, divorced from truth and non-violence. Truth and non-violence are synonymous with God, and whatever we do is nothing worth apart from them. Our little doings and little systems will disappear, but truth and non-violence will endure for ever. Any power that I possess, any influence that I wield is derived from my fifty years' devotion to truth and non-violence. They give me new inspiration and new power every day, so much so that if I was completely saturated with them, I would not even need to argue with you.

"I should not be a votary of principles which depended for their existence on politics or anything else. I am their votary because they are omnipotent. Why do I regard truth and non-violence as synonymous with God? It is because I can make no one else or thing

my God, even as I have made no one my *guru*. They are priceless things and one has to purchase them with one's life.

"Holding then fast as I do to truth, can I advise going to the legislatures? What Jamnalalji stated seemed to come strangely from his lips. If fighting for the legislatures meant the sacrifice of truth and non-violence, democracy would not be worth a moment's purchase. The voice of the people is the voice of 300 millions that we have to represent. Is it not possible to do so with truth and non-violence? The voice of those who are not the representatives of the people, who are not the servants of the people will be different, but not of those who claim to be the servants of the 300 millions.

"A vast number of our people have secured the right to vote—nearly one-third of those who can vote. The elections gave us an opportunity of carrying the whole Congress programme to them. If that was so, were the members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh to stand aloof? We are pledged to the constructive programme, no doubt, but are we not then bound to see that those who go to the legislatures on our behalf, also carry out the constructive programme? Remember that no political programme can stand without the constructive programme. The whole of that programme is a symbol of truth and non-violence, and it is the principal function of the members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh to see that it does not suffer in any way.

"Gangadharrao Deshpande reminded me of what I had said at Faizpur, namely, that I was one of the thirty-one and half crores who had no right to vote. But that has no relevance to the point at issue today. What was our duty as members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh? Could we well have asked the people to refrain from voting? The Gandhi Seva Sangh is a voluntary organization formed to carry out the Congress programme. The Sardar enlisted every one of his workers in Gujarat, including the members of the sangh, to throw themselves heart and soul in the elections. Could he do otherwise? Should we have won the elections otherwise? Where else was he to find his election workers from? Was he to keep aloof and say, 'No, I have nothing to do with the elections as I am pledged to the constructive programme'? Rajagopalachari decided to stand for the assembly. When after the event we had a moment to ourselves he asked me about it. I told him that he was free to do what he liked. He was no less a votary of truth and non-violence than I. In the

Madras Presidency at least we had such sweeping victories because of the constructive work that was done there.

"How was I to ask friends not to go to the legislatures? Was the Sardar, who went on sending people to the assemblies, to be asked to resign the membership of the sangh? Jamnalalji helped the cause with his funds and otherwise. Was he to be asked to resign?

"No. That could not be. We could not form ourselves into a narrow coterie and remain aloof. That would be ruining the constructive work of the Congress. And what is the Congress apart from its votaries?

"Mind it is not that I am asking you to permit your members to go to the legislatures as a necessary evil. It may be a duty. The legislatures are today we the representatives of the people. We have to carry out our truth and non-violence there. I have withdrawn from the Congress for the reasons special to me and in order to help the Congress all the more. All my time and energy are dedicated to it so long as it swears by the programme of 1920, based on truth and non-violence.

"But how, it is asked, may we go to the institutions to which we have been opposed? The legislatures of today are different from the old. We do not want to destroy them, we want to destroy the system which they are created to work.

"We go there, if we do, not to sacrifice truth and non-violence but in order to vindicate them. Today the Congress has to spend a few lakhs on elections. When we have become an irresistible power in the land, we should have to spend not a single pie. But the fact is that we generally only talk of the constructive programme. What have we really achieved until now? How many experts in the khadi science have we got today? If we had carried out the constructive programme to the full, there would have been no other party but the Congress party in any province.

"But let me tell you that all that I have said does not mean that all of you should now begin thinking of the legislatures. Not only not all, but no one of the sangh will attempt to go to the legislatures. What I mean to say is no one will shirk it, should an occasion arise. It does not need legal acumen to be able to go there. Bravery and steadfast faith in the constructive programme are all that is needed. If you went there, I should expect you to ply your *taklis* there, to work for prohibition and for the constructive programme. But there

should be no scramble for power. For, that will mean our undoing. Only those will go as are asked by the Gandhi Seva Sangh to go. I do not deny that the legislatures are a great temptation, almost like liquor booths. They hold out opportunities to self-seekers and job-hunters. But no Congressman, no member of the Gandhi Seva Sangh can go with that sordid motive. The Congress leader will compel attention to the programme and will not permit the slightest tampering with it. Men thus pledged will go there out of a sense of duty and not as a necessary evil. We have, if we can, to fill all the eleven assemblies with such men, true as steel, and pledged to serve, and with no axes to grind.

"As regards the oath of allegiance, I should ask no one to go to the legislatures who has a conscientious objection to the oath. It is not a religious oath, so far as I understand the constitution, and it is wholly consistent with the demand for immediate and concrete independence."

Some of the sangh resolutions provoked interesting discussion. The sangh members were all pledged to the removal of untouchability but how were they to persuade their own family members to go the whole hog with them? The Harijan Sevak Sangh was pledged to the removal of untouchability but it did not propagate inter-dining or intermarriage. Could the members of the sangh shelter under that restricted programme? "Certainly not," said Gandhi. "And that is what the resolution means. I may not ask the others but I have to abolish untouchability in all its aspects from my life. Ever since I was in South Africa, I have not observed it, I have entertained the so-called untouchables in my home and observed not the slightest distinction. So far as the public is concerned, I would not mind their not practising inter-dining or intermarriage. But how can I conceal my conviction from you the members of the sangh? You may not coerce your family members, but neither should they coerce you. Your mother or your sister may insist on having a separate kitchen, but she has no right to expect you not to associate or dine with a Harijan. If they are your mother and sister, even so is the Harijan your brother, and if you may not offend them, neither may you offend the Harijan. You will tell your mother that you will not fail in your duty to her, you will serve her and nurse her when ill and do everything else for her; but you cannot submit to her insistence on your not doing the same service to the Harijan mothers and sisters.

No stone should be left unturned to bring home to the family members that untouchability is a sin and a blot on Hinduism."

Mashruwala could not possibly reconcile himself to the resolution to the effect that the sangh should permit such members as it thought fit to go to the legislatures. At the concluding discourse, Gandhi explained how he had succeeded in persuading Mashruwala not to press his resignation from the presidentship and dealt with the implications of the resolution:

"I shall now try to dispel his doubts and I want you to help me in doing so. His doubt and his fear are that the parliamentary programme always rouses passions and makes one forget himself and so one naturally forgets truth and non-violence. The only thing that separates us from the brute, with which we have much in common, is the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong. We very often lose even that and reduce ourselves to the condition of the brute. I grant that the parliamentary programme is likely to rouse one's passions and exposes one to great temptations. But shall we shirk it just because of this reason? Should we not resist them? But Kishorlal says, 'Having steered clear of these all these years, why invite these troubles upon ourselves? We have enough work to do and we may not add to it.' He also objects that the Congress resolutions do not always express the truth. Now this is unfair, for our resolutions express what is in our minds. For instance, the Congress resolution says that we want to end this constitution. Up to now we have been saying that we should not go near a thing we want to end. We have up to now insisted upon the boycott of legislatures, schools, courts, etc., which we wanted to end. This doubt is not only in Kishorlal's mind but in many other minds. We are thinking of the language of the Congress manifesto in the drafting of which many like Pandit Jawaharlal, Sardar Patel and Rajendra Babu have had a share. The operative part of the A.-I.C.C. resolution was drafted by me.

"Now, have I infringed truth in drafting that part of the resolution, or have I written in a language which is inconsistent with the Congress manifesto? I can truthfully tell you that I see no untruth and no inconsistency. A satyagrahi is sometimes bound to use language which is capable of two meanings, provided both the meanings are obvious and necessary and there is no intention to deceive anyone. The language of the Vedas and the Gita often yields several

meanings. Tulsidas' Ramayana has verses which often yield several meanings. Neither the authors nor the interpreters and commentators were untruthful. The Congress resolution is undoubtedly framed to satisfy two groups. Office acceptance is not obligatory. One who thinks it inconsistent with the object of ending the act will naturally not take office. If those who go to the legislatures are pledged to truth and non-violence, fearlessness and selflessness, and if they were to accept the ministerships on our terms, we could win swaraj and make the present constitution give place to our own. Jawaharlal does not think so. That is a difference that is fundamental between him and me. In the same way he believes in the inevitability of the class war and doubts the possibility of conversion of capitalists. No doubt, capital is lifeless, but not the capitalists who are amenable to conversion. And yet with these different beliefs we work together. Jawaharlal works with his colleagues in the faith that he will convert them to his view one day. And his colleagues expect by association to convert him.

"Assuming that there has been no untruth so far, says Kishorlal, what if he discovers untruth or violence being practised in future by the sangh members who are pledged to truth and non-violence? My answer to him is, 'You may then smash the sangh and give it a decent burial.' 'Who am I to do so?' he asks. I say to him, 'You have every right to do so as the head of the sangh; it may even be your duty to do so. The sangh must not exist, if its members propagate untruth or violence.'

"Our programme is one and one only—the constructive work—for, therein lies swaraj. But we sacrifice not an iota of truth and non-violence in going to the legislatures. There too we want to help the constructive work. I tell you if we had been plying the wheel intelligently, we should have had swaraj, and should not have had to go to the legislatures. We have played with the wheel so far, not plied it intelligently. Now if we want to do so, we have to be intimately associated with the representatives of the three crore voters. It does not mean we should, therefore, all go to the legislatures or allow all those of us to go as want to go there. We have to examine each case. This means that we do not throw the doors of the sangh open to all the members of the legislatures. We open them only for those who are pledged to the constructive programme and without whom the Congress should have to lose an assembly seat. Take, for

instance, Jethalal of Anantpur. He has not the making of a legislator. He has no time for anything but his spinning wheel. But should the leader of his province feel that the Anantpur seat would be lost unless Jethalal stood for it, we should willingly send him. Indeed, I should do it with pleasure, inasmuch as it would be one charkha-believer going to the legislature and we want if possible to fill them with all charkha-believers. But you will say all of you are such, and that, therefore, all should be permitted. Only those would go, who are wanted there.

"We charkha-pliers are regarded as a dense lot, and indeed we should deserve the description if we ply it unintelligently. Remember the story of Ekalavya in the Mahabharata, who made a clay image of Drona and sat opposite to it worshipping in order to achieve accomplishment in archery. For him it was no clay image. It was a living image and so his faith was rewarded. We should all have the faith of Ekalavya. And if we could have that faith in the charkha, it would be a living image for us. And then we would bring to bear on it all our intellect and our will and heart. It is for us a symbol of non-violence.

"If you have not a living faith in the charkha and the other constructive programme of the Congress, Kishorlal's fears will prove true. I have no such fear because I believe in you. If I did not believe in you, I should not be here. In making room for the parliamentary programme we are advancing a step further in the direction of non-violence. If I have brought this conviction home to you, we shall have made rapid strides during the next year. Whether we as a nation are advancing further towards truth and non-violence has yet to be proved. It cannot be proved if we of the sangh close our doors against the legislatures. Nor can it be proved if we go there with any mental reservation. If we go there with all the strength of faith in truth and non-violence, we shall have fulfilled our trust and made further progress towards the goal and towards truth and non-violence. But if we do not, then as I have told Kishorlal he has but to cremate the sangh. We have to cremate it cheerfully even as we do the body of our dead father, for we know that the soul has left the body.

"But how can inconcrete entities like truth and non-violence be organized as the sangh is expected to do? I maintain that they can be so organized. Otherwise they would, for me, cease to be eternal

principles. An eternal principle, as the Jains say, has no exceptions. Truth and non-violence are thus no cloistered virtues but applicable as much in the forum and the legislatures as in the market-place. Your faith is going to be put to a severe trial, but you will not shirk it merely because it will be a severe trial.

"Truth and non-violence are not for the dense. Pursuit of them is bound to result in an all-round growth of the body, mind and heart. If this does not follow, either truth and non-violence are untrue or we are untrue, and since the former is impossible the latter will be the only conclusion. The whole of the constructive programme—including hand-spinning and hand-weaving, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, prohibition—is in pursuit of truth and non-violence. If there can be any interest for us in going to the legislatures, it can be only for this reason and nothing else. Truth and non-violence are both the means and the end, and given the right type of men, the legislatures can be the means of achieving the concrete pursuit of truth and non-violence. If they cannot be that, it will be our fault and not theirs. If we have a real hold on the masses, the legislatures are bound to be that and nothing less.

"That leads me to Shri Thakkar's question: whether introduction of the constructive programme in the villages is our goal or political education is our goal. I think it rather odd that this question should be put after seventeen years' working of the programme. For me, there is no political education apart from the constructive programme. If I went to the people just to win their votes, I should be guilty of the same error as I am laying at the door of our missionary friends. There is no other political education but the constructive programme which is an education in itself. In South Africa, I did not give any political education so called to the so-called coolies, but they rose to the occasion because of the solid work done in their midst. In 1921, the programme of civil disobedience was placed before the people of Bardoli, but the preliminary condition they had to satisfy was a fulfilment of the constructive programme. That programme was, to my shame and the Sardar's shame, never wholly fulfilled, but to the extent it was fulfilled, Bardoli carried on two successful satyagraha campaigns. After the campaign was withdrawn what remained was the spinning wheel and other parts of the constructive programme. The Congress has to carry out that programme and finish thereby the political education of the people, if it still has

faith in the programme. Otherwise, it should throw the programme overboard.

"We the educated folk were found wanting in giving that political education. Even before the socialists, whom I regard as my friends, I place the same programme. Only therethrough could they inspire the people with the power to claim all the land as their own. I cannot ask them to wrest it from those who own it. All land belongs to God, that is, the people, but does that mean that all Jamnalalji's land should be distributed among thirty crores of people? All that we can do is to constitute him a trustee for us. In Segaon, he offers me all the land that belongs to him, but I cannot take charge of it, for I have not the skill of his manager. But the result is that all the profits belong to me and all the loss belongs to him. If there is anyone who is prepared to carry out the constructive programme as outlined by me, Jamnalalji will willingly place him in charge of his other lands outside Segaon on the terms on which he has given the Segaon lands to me.

"The sphere of action of the A.-I.S.A. is limited, likewise that of the A.-I.V.I.A. is limited, and also of the other bodies like the Cow Protection Association. But yours is unlimited. You are a body of workers pledged to truth and non-violence and to the whole programme that these principles express. Yours is a mighty tree of which the associations I have named may be called branches. The Indian National Congress is a mighty body of which we are parts; but it is a democratic body and must reflect both the strength and the weakness of the millions it represents. Yours is a voluntary organization and, therefore, reflects only your strength. Your action should be a matter of pride and privilege to the different associations with their limited spheres of activity, all of which you are pledged to stand for. I expect you, therefore, to declare in no uncertain terms that you stand for all the constructive activities of the Congress, and that if you stand for the legislatures you will do so for carrying them out.

"If what I have said has failed to carry conviction, my language must be imperfect, I am imperfect. For me the spinning wheel is all in all. I do not know whether I am a Karmayogi or any other yogi. I know that I cannot live without work. I crave to die with my hand at the spinning wheel. If one has to establish communion with God through some means, why not through the spinning wheel? Him who worships Me, says the Lord in the Gita, I guide along the right

path and see to his needs. My God is myriad-formed. While sometimes I see Him in the spinning wheel, at other times I see Him in communal unity, then again in the removal of untouchability; and that is how I establish communion with Him according as the spirit moves me."

Harijan continued to eschew politics and put the main stress on the constructive programme, the significance of which was vividly explained by Gandhi in an article dated May 15:

"The Congress Working Committee has emphasized the necessity of the members of the legislatures and other workers taking the constructive programme of 1920 to three crore villagers between whom and their representatives a direct contact has been established. The representatives may, if they choose, neglect them, or give them some paltry or even substantial relief from the financial burdens; but they cannot give the villagers self-confidence and dignity and the power of continuously bettering their own position, unless they will interest them in the fourfold constructive programme, that is, universal hand-spinning, Hindu-Muslim unity or rather communal unity, promotion of total prohibition by propaganda among those who are addicted to the drink habit, and the removal by Hindus of untouchability, root and branch.

"It was announced in 1920 and 1921 from a thousand platforms that attainment of swaraj by the non-violent method was impossible without these four things. I hold that it is not less true today.

"It is one thing to improve the economic condition of the masses by state regulation of taxation, and wholly another for them to feel that they have bettered their condition by their own sole personal effort. Now this they can only do through hand-spinning and other village handicrafts.

"Similarly it is one thing to regulate communal conduct by means of pacts between the leaders, voluntary or imposed by the state; it is wholly different for the masses to respect one another's religious and outward observances. This cannot be done unless the legislators and workers would go out among the villagers and teach them mutual toleration.

"Again it is one thing to impose, as we must, prohibition by law, and another to sustain it by willing obedience to it. It is a defeatist arm-chair mentality which says that it cannot work without an expensive and elaborate system of espionage. Surely, if the workers went

out to the villagers and demonstrated the evil of drink wherever it is prevalent, and if research scholars found out the causes of alcoholism and proper knowledge was imparted to the people, prohibition should not only prove inexpensive but profitable. This is a work essentially for women to handle.

"Lastly, we may banish by statute, as we must, the evil consequences of untouchability. But we cannot have real independence unless people banish the touch-me-not spirit from their hearts. The masses cannot act as one man or with one mind unless they eradicate untouchability from their hearts.

"Thus, this and the three other items are a matter of true mass education. And it has become imperatively necessary now that the three crores of men and women have rightly or wrongly power put into their hands. However hedged in it is, Congressmen and others, who want the suffrages of these voters, have it in their hands either to educate the three crores of mankind along the right lines or the wrong. It would be the wrong line to neglect them altogether in matters which most vitally concern them."

The month of May he spent at Tithal, a seaside place in Gujarat, to combine rest with work. In his leisure hours he discussed plans of the forthcoming Congress session with Nandalal Bose. He talked on cow protection to the village workers, and for a change, he discussed with Kallenbach, his old friend from South Africa, the plight of Jews in Nazi Germany. Addressing a small conference of the teachers in the national schools, he said:

"If we want to impart education best suited to the needs of villagers, we should take the *vidhyapith* to the villages. We should convert it into a training-school in order that we might be able to give practical training to teachers in terms of the needs of the villagers. You cannot instruct the teachers in the needs of villagers through a training-school in a city. Nor can you so interest them in the condition of villages. To interest city dwellers in villages and make them live in them is no easy task. I am finding daily confirmation of this in Segaon. I cannot give you the assurance that our year's stay in Segaon has made of us villagers or that we have become one with them for common good.

"Then, as to the primary education my confirmed opinion is that the commencement of training by teaching the alphabet and reading and writing hampers their intellectual growth. I would not teach

them the alphabet, till they have had an elementary knowledge of history, geography, mental arithmetic, and the art of hand-spinning. Through these three, I should develop their intelligence. A question may be asked how intelligence can be developed through the *takli* or the spinning wheel. It can to a marvellous degree, if it is not taught merely mechanically. When you tell a child the reason for each process, when you explain the mechanism of the *takli* or spinning wheel, when you give him the history of cotton and its connection with the civilization itself and take him to the village field where it is grown, and teach him to count the rounds he spins and the method of finding the evenness and strength of his yarn, you hold his interest and simultaneously train his hands, his eyes and his mind. I should give six months to this preliminary training. The child is probably now ready for learning how to read the alphabet, and when he is able to do so rapidly he is ready to learn drawing, and when he has learnt to draw the geometrical figures and the figures of birds, etc., he will draw, not scrawl, figures of the alphabet. I can recall the days of my childhood, when I was being taught the alphabet. I know what a drag it was. Nobody cared why my intellect was rusting. I consider writing as a fine art. We kill it by imposing the alphabet on little children and making it the beginning of learning. Thus we do violence to the art of writing and stunt the growth of the child when we seek to teach him the alphabet before its time.

"Indeed, in my humble opinion, what we have reason to deplore and be ashamed of is not so much illiteracy as ignorance. Therefore, for adult education too I should have intensive programme of driving out ignorance through carefully selected teachers with an equally carefully selected syllabus according to which they would educate the adult villagers' mind. This is not to say that I would not give them a knowledge of the alphabet. I value it too much to despise or even belittle its merit as a vehicle of education. I appreciate Professor Laubach's immense labours in the way of making the alphabet easy and Professor Bhagwat's great and practical contribution in the same direction. Indeed, I have invited the latter to come to Segaon whenever he chooses and try his art on the men and women, and even children of Segaon.

"As to the necessity and value of regarding the teaching of village handicrafts as the pivot and centre of education I have no manner of doubt. The method adopted in the institutions in India I do not call

education, that is, drawing out the best in man, but a debauchery of the mind. It informs the mind anyhow, whereas the method of training the mind through village handicrafts from the very beginning as the central fact would promote the real, disciplined development of the mind resulting in conservation of the intellectual energy and indirectly also the spiritual. Here I must not be understood to belittle fine arts. But I would not misplace them. Matter misplaced has been rightly described as dirt. In proof of what I am saying, I can cite tons of worthless and even indecent literature that is pouring in upon us with the result which he who runs may see."

In June, Gandhi returned to Segaon. One of his first visitors was Capt. Strunk, representative of a Nazi paper. He wanted to know the content of independence and how far people of India seriously meant it. To him, Gandhi said: "What we mean by independence is that we will not live on the sufferance of any people on earth and that there is a big party in India which will die in vindicating this position. But we will not die killing, though we might be killed. It is a novel experience I know. Herr Hitler, I know, does not accept the position of human dignity being maintained without the use of force. Many of us feel that it is possible to achieve independence by non-violent means. It would be a bad day for the whole world, if we had to wade through blood. If India gains her freedom by a clash of arms, it will indefinitely postpone the day of real peace for the world. History is a record of perpetual wars, but we are trying to make new history, and I say this as I represent the national mind so far as non-violence is concerned. I have reasoned out the doctrine of the sword, I have worked out its possibilities and come to the conclusion that man's dignity is to replace the law of the jungle with the law of conscious love. The aspiration for independence is the aspiration that fires all nations in Europe. But that independence does not exclude voluntary partnership. Imperialistic ambition is inconsistent with partnership."

Captain Strunk had heard vaguely about his views on machines, and western civilization and western medicine. He wanted to know them at first hand. Gandhi emphasized: "I have said that we cannot accept western models. I do not believe in mechanization of India. I think that rural reconstruction is possible."

"Are you likely to change these views after you have gained your objective of independence?"

"No. These views represent my permanent convictions. My opposition to machinery, railways, etc., does not mean that as soon as we are independent we should uproot all of them. They will be used for the benefit of the nation instead of the strategic military purpose they are principally meant to fulfil today."

"Sometimes you direct your speech against western sanitation and western surgery. What is your future plan with regard to India?

"I am glad you have asked the question. I have said nothing with regard to western sanitation. In fact, I have copied it here. But I have spoken against western medicine which I have called the concentrated essence of black magic. My view springs out of my non-violence, for my soul rebels against vivisection. You do not know that I had very nearly taken the medical line, when in order to respect the wishes of my dead father I took up law. But in South Africa I again thought of medicine, when I was told I should have to do vivisection, my soul rebelled against it. Why should I, I said, have to practise cruelty on lower animals which I would never practise upon myself? But I do not despise all medical treatment. I know that we can learn a lot from the West about safe maternity and the care of infants. Our children are born anyhow and most of our women are ignorant of the science of bringing up children. Here we can learn a good deal from the West.

"But the West attaches an exaggerated importance to prolonging man's earthly existence. Until the man's last moment on earth, you go on drugging him even by injecting. That, I think, is inconsistent with the recklessness with which they will shed their lives in war. Although I am opposed to war, there is no doubt that war induces reckless courage. Without ever having to engage in a war, I want to learn from you the art of throwing away my life for a noble cause. But I do not want that excessive desire of living that western medicine seems to encourage in man even at the cost of tenderness for sub-human life. However, I like the emphasis the western medical science places upon prevention of disease."

"There is so much overproduction of intelligence in India, so much educated unemployment. Could not this army of educated young men be utilized by being sent to the villages?"

"That movement has commenced," said Gandhi, "but it is only in its infancy. And then there is no overproduction of intelligence but overproduction of degrees. The brain power has not at all increased,

only the art of memorizing has been stimulated, and these degrees cannot be carted to villages. Only the brains, if there are any left, can be used. This reading for degrees has deprived us of initiative. It makes us unfit to go to the villages. The mechanical university study deprives us of the desire for originality; years of memorizing causes a fatigue of the mind that makes most of us fit for the clerical work. Nevertheless, the village movement has come to stay."

In paying a tribute to the memory of Chhotelal Jain who died in August, Gandhi gave his conception of a constructive worker:

"The inmates of Satyagraha Ashram of Sabarmati are today a scattered family, joined together only by their common vow of silent service. No one, perhaps, with the exception of the late Maganlal Gandhi, personified so nearly this self-effacing ideal as Chhotelal Jain, whose death, through suicide, has just stunned me. I have not adequate language to describe his insatiable capacity for silent service. He dreaded publicity and loved to live and serve unknown. In fact, it may be said of him that his right hand did not know what his left hand was doing. I do not remember his ever visiting his relations or being visited by them. He never even mentioned them to anyone. At the time of writing, I do not even know their names or their whereabouts.

"I have the good luck to have a band of co-workers who are to me as my hands and feet. Without their willing and loyal co-operation I should feel utterly helpless. Prominent among these was Chhotelal. He had a versatile and powerful intelligence which shirked no task howsoever difficult. He was a born linguist. Rajputana being his home, Hindi was his mother tongue, but he knew Gujarati, Marathi, Bengali, Tamil, Sanskrit and English as well. He knew also the Urdu script. I have seldom seen anybody with such aptitude for quickly mastering a new language or a new task. He was one of the foundation members of the Sabarmati ashram. He went through the whole range of ashram activities with natural ease, and hardly touched anything that he did not adorn. Thus he felt equally at home whether he was engaged in kitchen work, conservancy, spinning or weaving, accounts, or translation work, or correspondence.

"The riskier the job the more it was welcomed by Chhotelal, and once he took it up, he knew no rest till he had seen it through. He threw himself with the indefatigable energy, which was his characteristic, into any task that he took up, and at the end of it he would

still be fresh and ready for the next one. The words weariness and fatigue were not in his dictionary. To render service only, never to receive any, was the passion of his life. When the All-India Village Industries Association was started at Wardha, it was Chhotelal who first learnt and then introduced the art of *ghani* in Maganwadi. It was he who introduced the wooden hand-mill for rice-husking. Again, it was he who started bee culture there. Today I feel disconsolate and crippled by his loss. And I am sure, if we could only know it, the same must be the feeling of the bees whom he had gathered and was looking after with a mother's care. I do not know who else will look after them with the loving care of Chhotelal. For, Chhotelal had literally become apiculture-mad. In the course of his quest, he had contracted paratyphoid fever which had a fatal ending. He had been bed-ridden for hardly six or seven days, but the very thought of being a helpless charge upon others evidently ate into him, and on Tuesday night, the 31st of August, leaving everybody asleep, he put an end to his life by throwing himself into the Maganwadi well. The corpse was recovered from the well today, Wednesday, at 4 p.m. And even as I pen these lines at Segaon, at 8 p.m., his body is being cremated at Wardha.

"I have not the heart to rebuke Chhotelal for his suicide. He was no coward. He was guilty of no unworthy deed. He could laugh at suffering. I cannot account for this self-immolation except on the supposition that he could no longer brook to be nursed. No doubt that is a sign of subtle pride. But there it was. Chhotelal was not conscious of it.

"His name figured in the Delhi conspiracy case of 1915. He was acquitted. He had told me that he did not desire acquittal. A casual reading of some of my writings gave a new turn to his life and outlook. He studied my activities in South Africa, and from a violent revolutionary became a votary of non-violence. He shed his cult of violence as completely and as naturally as a snake does its outworn skin, but he could never completely control the proneness to anger and pride that were deeply ingrained in his nature. Did he expiate with his life for these?

"By his death—he was forty-two—he has left me heavily in his debt. I had entertained high hopes of him, I could not tolerate any imperfection in him and so he had often to bear the brunt of my impatience as, perhaps, only one or two besides him have borne. But

he never complained, never even winced. Had I any right to put him through this fire as I used to? I had hope one day to discharge my debt towards him by offering him as a sacrifice at the altar of Hindu-Muslim unity, untouchability or cow protection. To my mind these are some of the altars in the great *yajna* of the swaraj of my dream. And Chhotelal was in the front rank of the few who, to my knowledge, had the strength and capacity to claim this privilege.

"The country needs an army of silent warriors like him. The achievement of swaraj, which to me is synonymous with Ram Raj, is no joke. Let these few glimpses of Chhotelal's life serve as an inspiration in our striving for India's freedom."

Instrument Of Instructions

1937

On July 17, 1937 the self-imposed ban on politics in *Harijan* was removed. On Congress ministries, Gandhi wrote: "Since the Working Committee and other Congressmen have allowed themselves to be influenced by my opinion on office acceptance issue, it is perhaps due to the public for me to explain my conception of office acceptance and what is possible to do in terms of the Congress election manifesto. I need offer no apology for crossing the self-imposed limit in the conduct of *Harijan*. The reason is obvious. The Government of India Act is universally regarded as wholly unsatisfactory for achieving India's freedom. But it is possible to construe it as an attempt, however limited and feeble, to replace the rule of the sword by the rule of the majority. The creation of the big electorate of three crores of men and women and the placing of wide powers in their hands cannot be described by any other name. Underlying it is the hope that what has been imposed upon us we shall get to like, that is, we shall really regard our exploitation as a blessing in the end. The hope may be frustrated, if the representatives of the thirty million voters have a faith of their own and are intelligent enough to use the powers—including the holding of offices—placed in their hands, for the purpose of thwarting the assumed intention of the framers of the act. And this can be easily done by lawfully using the act in a manner not expected by them and by refraining from using it in the way intended by them.

"Thus, ministries may enforce immediate prohibition by making education self-supporting instead of paying for it from the liquor revenue. This may appear a startling proposition, but I hold it perfectly feasible and eminently reasonable. The jails may be turned into reformatories and workshops. They should be educational and self-supporting instead of being spending and punitive departments. In accordance with the Irwin-Gandhi pact, of which only the salt

clause remains still alive, salt should be free for the poor man, but it is not; it can now be free in Congress provinces at least. All purchases of cloth should be in khadi. Attention should now be given more to the villages and the peasantry than to the cities. These are but illustrations taken at random. They are perfectly lawful, and yet not one of them has as yet even been attempted.

"Then the personal behaviour of ministers. How will the Congress ministers discharge themselves? Their chief, the Congress President, travels in the third class. Will they travel first? The president is satisfied with a coarse khadi dhoti and *kurta* and waistcoat. Will the ministers require the western style and expenditure on the western scale? Congressmen have for the past seventeen years disciplined themselves in rigorous simplicity. The nation will expect the ministers to introduce that simplicity in the administration of their provinces. They will not be ashamed of it, they will be proud of it. We are the poorest nation on earth, many millions living in semi-starvation. Its representatives dare not live in a style and manner out of all correspondence with their electors. The Englishmen coming as conquerors and rulers set up a standard of living which took no account whatsoever of the helpless conquered. If the ministers will simply refrain from copying the Governors and the secured civil service, they will have shown the marked contrast that exists between the Congress mentality and theirs. Truly, there can be no partnership between them and us even as there can be none between a giant and dwarf.

"Lest Congressmen should think that they have a monopoly of simplicity and that they erred in 1920 in doing away with the trousers and the chair, let me quote the examples of Abu Bakr and Omar. Rama and Krishna are prehistoric names. I may not use these names as examples. History tells us of Pratap and Shivaji living in utmost simplicity. But opinion may be divided as to what they did when they had power. There is no division of opinion about the Prophet, Abu Bakr and Omar. They had the riches of the world at their feet. It will be difficult to find a historical parallel to match their rigorous life. Omar would not brook the idea of his lieutenants in the distant provinces using anything but coarse cloth and coarse flour. Congress ministers, if they will retain the simplicity and economy they have inherited since 1920, will save thousands of rupees, give hope to the poor and probably change the tone of the services. It is hardly necessary for me to point out that simplicity does not mean shoddiness.



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi abandoning his temporary hut in Hodli village owing to heavy rains, April 1937

Photograph : Cosmic Press

Gandhi on the way to Kumri village, a couple of miles from Hudli, April 1937

At Khadi Ashram, Gandhi's residence in Kumri village, April 1937

Dear Gurudev,

Your precious letter is before me. You have anticipated me. I wanted to write as soon as Sir Nilratan sent me his last reassuring wire. But my right hand needs rest. I did not want to dictate. The left hand works slow. This is merely to show you what love some of us bear towards you. I verily believe that the silent prayers from the hearts of your admirers have been heard and you are still with us. You are not a mere singer of the world. Your living word is a guide and an inspiration to thousands. May you be spared for many a long year yet to come.

With deep love,

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

Segaon, Wardha

23-9-'37

Courtesy : Visva-Bharati

Gandhi's letter to Tagore, dated Segaon, September 23, 1937





From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi arriving at Wardha to attend Educational Conference, October 22, 1937
Gandhi presiding over the Educational Conference

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi on the way to Calcutta, October 1937





From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi with his host, Subhas Bose, Calcutta, October 1937

Gandhi emerging from the Presidency Jail after his interview with the political prisoners, Calcutta, November 1937

Photograph: Bourne & Shepherd

Gandhi watching the performance by Seraikella dancers at the residence of Subhas Bose, Calcutta, November 1937



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi on the Juhu beach, Bombay, during his convalescence, December 1937

There is a beauty and an art in simplicity which he who runs may see. It does not require money to be neat, clean, dignified. Pomp and pageantry are often synonymous with vulgarity.

"This unostentatious work must be the prelude to demonstrating the utter insufficiency of the act to meet the wishes of the people and the determination to end it.

"The English press has been at pains to divide India into Hindu and Muslim. The Congress majority provinces have been dubbed Hindu, and the other five Muslim. That this is demonstrably false has not worried them. My great hope is that the ministers in the six provinces will so manage them as to disarm all suspicion. They will show their Muslim colleagues that they know no distinction between Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Sikh or Parsi. Nor will they know any distinction between the high-caste and low-caste Hindu. They will demonstrate in every action of theirs that with them all are the sons of the soil among whom there is no one low and no one high. Poverty and climate are common to all without distinction. The major problems are identical for all of them. And so far as we can judge from actions, the goal of the English system is wholly different from ours, the men and the women representing the two goals belong to the same human family. They will now be thrown together as they never have been before. If the human reading that I have given to the act is correct, the two parties meet together, each with its own history and background and goal, to convert one another. Corporations are wooden and soulless but not those who work them or use them. If the Englishmen or Anglicized Indians can but see the Indian which is the Congress viewpoint, the battle is won by the Congress and complete independence will come without shedding a drop of blood. This is what I call the non-violent approach. It may be visionary, foolish, impractical; nevertheless it is best that Congressmen, other Indians and Englishmen should know it. This office acceptance is not intended to work the act anyhow. In the prosecution by the Congress of its goal of Complete Independence, it is a serious attempt on the one hand to avoid a bloody revolution and on the other to avoid mass civil disobedience on a scale hitherto never attempted. May God bless it."

Parliamentary activities of the Congress were guided by Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad. But the main inspiration and policy emanated from Segaon. Every issue of *Harijan* contained

a moral directive to the ministers. On July 24, Gandhi explained the fundamental difference between the old order and the new:

"It is necessary to contemplate for a moment the fundamental difference between the old and the new order. In order fully to realize it, we must try to forget for the moment the crushing limitations of the act. Seeing that the Congress has gone to the farthest limit and has accepted office, let every Congressman note the power it has taken. Whereas formerly the ministers were amenable to the control of the Governors, now they are under the control of the Congress. They are responsible to the Congress. They owe their status to the Congress. The Governors and the civil service though irremovable are yet answerable to the ministers. The ministers have effective control over them up to a point. And that point enables the ministers to consolidate the power of the Congress, that is, the people. The ministers have the whip hand, so long as they act within the four corners of the act, no matter how distasteful their actions may be to the Governors. It will be found upon examination that so long as the people remain non-violent, the Congress ministers have enough freedom of action for national growth.

"For effective use of this power, the people have to give hearty co-operation to the Congress and their ministers. If the latter do wrong or they neglect their duty, it is open to any person to complain to the secretary of the A.-I.C.C. and seek redress. But no one may take the law into his own hands.

"Congressmen should also realize that there is no other political party in the field to question the authority of the Congress. For, the other parties have never penetrated the villages. And that is not a work which can be done in a day. So far, therefore, as I can see a vast opportunity is at the disposal of the ministers in terms of the Congress objective of Complete Independence, if only the ministers are honest, selfless, industrious, vigilant, and solicitous for the true welfare of the starving millions. No doubt there is great validity in the argument that the act has left the ministers no money to spend for the nation-building departments. But this is largely an illusion. I believe with Sir Daniel Hamilton that labour, and not metal, is real money. And labour backed by paper is as good as, if not better than, paper backed by gold. Here are the sentiments of the English financier who has held high office in India: 'The worst legacy that we have left to India is a high-grade service. What has been done

cannot be undone. And I should now start something independent. Whatever is being done today with money motive should in future be based on service motive. Why should the teachers and doctors be paid high salaries? Why cannot most of the work be done on a co-operative basis? Why should you worry about capital when there are seven hundred million hands to toil? If things are done on a co-operative basis, which in other words, is modified socialism, money would not be needed, at least not in large quantity.' I find this verified in little Segaon. The four hundred adults of Segaon can easily put ten thousand rupees annually into their own pockets, if only they would work as I ask them. But they won't. They lack co-operation, they do not know the art of intelligent labour, they refuse to learn anything new. Untouchability blocks the way. If someone presented them with a lakh of rupees, they would not turn it to account. They are not responsible for this state of affairs. We the middle class are. What is true of Segaon is true of other villages. They will respond by patient effort as they are responding in Segaon though ever so slowly. The state can do much in this direction without having to spend a single pie extra. The state officials can be utilized for serving the people instead of harassing them. The villagers may not be coerced into doing anything. They can be educated to do things which enrich them morally, mentally, physically and economically."

In *Harijan* dated July 31, Gandhi answered at length the critics who opposed his programme:

"How can total prohibition be brought about immediately if at all? By 'immediately' I mean immediate planned declaration bringing about total prohibition not later than three years from 14th July 1937, the date of the taking of office by the first Congress ministry. I imagine that it is quite possible to bring it about in two years. But not being aware of administrative difficulties I put down three years. I count loss of this revenue as of no account whatsoever. Prohibition will remain a far cry, if the Congress is to count the cost in a matter of first-class national importance.

"Let it be remembered that this drink and drugs revenue is a form of extremely degrading taxation. All taxation to be healthy must return tenfold to the taxpayer in the form of necessary services. Excise makes people pay for their own corruption, moral and mental and physical. It falls like a dead weight on those who are least able to bear it. The revenue is largely derived, I believe, from the industrial

labour which together with the field labour the Congress almost exclusively represents.

"The loss of revenue is only apparent. Removal of this degrading tax enables the drinker, that is, the taxpayer to earn and to spend better. Apart, therefore, from the tremendous gain, it means a substantial economic gain, to the nation.

"I put this prohibition in the forefront because its result is immediate; Congressmen and especially women have bled for it; national prestige will rise in a manner it cannot by any single act that I can conceive, and the other five provinces are highly likely to follow the six. The Musalman non-Congress prime ministers are equally interested in seeing India sober rather than drunk.

"The cry of great expenditure in preventing illicit distillation is thoughtless where it is not hypocritical. India is not America. The American example is a hindrance rather than a help to us. Drinking carries no shame with it in America. It is a fashion there to drink. It reflects the greatest credit on the determined minority in America that by sheer force of its moral weight it was able to carry through the prohibition measure however shortlived it was. I do not regard that experiment to have been a failure. I do not despair of America once more returning to it with still greater fervour and better experience in dealing with it. It may be that if India carries out prohibition it will hasten the advent of prohibition in America. In no part of the world is prohibition as easy as in India, for with us it is only a minority that drinks. Drinker is generally considered disrespectable. And there are millions, I believe, who have never known what drink is.

"But why should prevention of illicit distillation cost any more than prevention of other crimes? I should make illicit distillation heavily punishable and think no more about it. Some of it will go on perhaps till doomsday as thieving will. I would not set up a special agency to pry into illicit distilleries. But I would punish anyone found drunk though not disorderly (in the legal sense) in streets or other public places with a substantial fine or alternatively with indeterminate imprisonment to end where the erring one has earned his or her keep.

"This, however, is the negative part. Voluntary organizations especially manned by women will work in the labour areas. They will visit those who are addicted to drink and try to wean them from the habit. Employers of labour will be expected by law to provide cheap,

healthy refreshment, reading and entertainment rooms where the working men can go and find shelter, knowledge, health-giving food and drink, and innocent fun.

"Thus prohibition means a type of adult education of the nation and not merely a closing down of grog shops.

"Prohibition should begin by preventing any new shop from being licensed and closing some that are in danger of becoming a nuisance to the public. How far the latter is possible without having to pay heavy compensation I do not know. In any case, generally, licences that lapse should not be renewed. No new shops should be opened on any account. Whatever immediately is possible in law should be done without a moment's thought so far as revenue is concerned.

"But what is the meaning or the extent of total prohibition? Total prohibition is prohibition against the sales of intoxicating drinks and drugs, except under medical prescription by a practitioner licensed for the purpose and to be purchasable only at Government depots maintained therefor. Foreign liquors in prescribed quantity may be imported for the use of Europeans who cannot and will not do without their drink. These will also be sold in bottles in the select areas and under authorized certificates. Hotels and restaurants will cease to sell intoxicating drinks.

"But what about relief to the peasantry which is oppressed by excesive taxation, rack-renting and illegal exactions, indebtedness which can never be fully discharged, illiteracy, superstition and disease, peculiarly due to pauperism? Of course, it comes first in terms of numbers and economic distress. But the relief of the peasantry is an elaborate programme and does not admit of wholesale treatment. No Congress ministry that does not handle this universal problem can exist for ten days. Every Congressman is instinctively interested, if largely academically, in this problem. He has inherited the legacy from the birth of the Congress. The distress of the peasantry may be said to be the *raison d'etre* of the Congress. There was and is no fear of this subject being neglected. I fear the same cannot be said of prohibition. Prohibition became an integral part of the Congress programme only in 1920. In my opinion, the Congress, now that it is in power, will put itself morally right, only by once for all courageously and drastically dealing with this devastating evil.

"How to solve the problem of education is the problem unfortunately mixed up with the disappearance of the drink revenues. No

doubt there are ways and means of raising fresh taxation. Professors Shah and Khambatta have shown that even this poor country is capable of raising fresh taxation. Riches have not yet been sufficiently taxed. In this of all the countries in the world, possession of inordinate wealth by individuals should be held as a crime against Indian humanity. Therefore, the maximum limit of taxation of the riches beyond a certain margin can never be reached. In England, I understand, they have already gone as far as seventy per cent of the earnings beyond a prescribed figure. And there is no reason why India should not go to a much higher figure. Why should there not be death-duties? Those sons of millionaires, who are of age and yet inherit their parents' wealth, are losers for the very inheritance. The nation thus becomes a double loser. For the inheritance should belong to the nation. The nation loses again in that the full faculties of the heirs are not drawn out, being crushed under load of riches. That death-duties cannot be imposed by the provincial governments does not affect my argument.

"But as a nation we are so backward in education that we cannot hope to fulfil our obligations to the nation in this respect in a given time during this generation, if the programme is to depend only on money. I have, therefore, made bold, even at the risk of losing all reputation for constructive ability, to suggest that education should be self-supporting. By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man—body and mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education, not even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would, therefore, begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the state takes over the manufactures of these schools.

"I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, that is, the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process. I am not writing this without confidence, because it has the backing of experience. This method is being adopted more or less completely wherever spinning is being taught to workers. I have myself taught sandal-making and even spinning on these lines

with good results. This method does not exclude a knowledge of history and geography. But I find that this is best taught by transmitting such general information by word of mouth. One imparts ten times as much in this manner as by reading and writing. The signs of the alphabet may be taught later when pupil has learnt to distinguish wheat from chaff and when he has somewhat developed his or her tastes. This is a revolutionary proposal but it saves immense labour and enables a student to acquire in one year what he may take much longer to learn. This means all-round economy. Of course, the pupil learns mathematics whilst he is learning his handicraft.

"I attach the greatest importance to the primary education which according to my conception should be equal to the present matriculation less English. If all collegians were all of a sudden to forget their knowledge, the loss sustained by the sudden lapse of the memory of say a few lakhs of collegians would be as nothing compared to the loss that the nation has sustained and is sustaining through the ocean of darkness that surrounds three hundred millions. Measure of illiteracy is no adequate measure of the prevailing ignorance among the millions of villagers.

"I would revolutionize the college education and relate it to the national necessities. There would be degrees for mechanical and other engineers. They would be attached to the different industries which should pay for the training of the graduates they need. Thus the Tatas would be expected to run a college for training engineers under the supervision of the state, the mill associations would run among them a college for training the graduates whom they need. Similarly for the other industries that may be named. Commerce will have its college. There remain arts, medicine and agriculture. Many private arts colleges are today self-supporting. The state would, therefore, cease to run its own. Medical colleges would be attached to certified hospitals. As they are popular among monied men they may be expected by voluntary contributions to support medical colleges. And agricultural colleges to be worthy of the name must be self-supporting. I have the painful experience of some agricultural graduates. Their knowledge is superficial. They lack practical experience. But if they had their apprenticeship on farms which are self-sustained and answer the requirements of the country, they would not have to gain experience after getting their degrees and at the expense of their employers.

"This is not a fanciful picture. If we would but shed our mental laziness, it would appear to be an eminently reasonable and practical solution of the problem of education that faces the Congress ministers and, therefore, the Congress. If the declarations recently made on behalf of the British Government mean what they sound to the ear, the ministers have the organizing and organized ability of the civil service at their disposal to execute their policy. The services have learnt the art of reducing to practice the policies laid down for them even by the capricious Governors and Viceroys. Let the ministers lay down a well-conceived but determined policy, and let the services redeem the promise made on their behalf and prove worthy of the salt they eat.

"There remains the question of teachers. I like Prof. K. T. Shah's idea of conscription being applied to men and women of learning. They may be conscripted to give a number of years, say five, to the teaching for which they may be qualified, on a salary not exceeding their maintenance on a scale in keeping with the economic level of the country. The very high salaries that the teachers and professors in the higher branches demand must go. The village teacher has to be replaced by more competent ones.

"My suggestion to turn jails into reformatories to make them self-supporting has not excited much criticism. Only one remark I have noticed. If they turn out marketable goods I am told, they will unfairly compete with the open market. There is no substance in the remark. I anticipated it in 1922, when I was a prisoner in Yeravda Jail. I discussed my plan with the then Home Member, the then inspector-general of prisons and superintendents who were in charge of the prison in succession. Not one of them cavilled at my suggestion. The then Home Member was even enthusiastic about it and wanted me to put my scheme in writing, if he could obtain the permission from the Governor. But His Excellency would not hear of a prisoner making suggestions regarding jail administration. And so my scheme never saw the light of day. But the author believes in its soundness today just as much as as when he first made it. This was the plan: All industries that were not paying should be stopped. All the jails should be turned into hand-spinning and hand-weaving institutions. They should include, wherever possible, cotton-growing to producing the finest cloth. I suggest that almost every facility for this purpose already exists in the prisons. Only the will has to be

there. Prisoners must be treated as defectives and not criminals to be looked down upon. Warders should cease to be the terrors of the prisoners, but the jail officials should be their friends and instructors. The one indispensable condition is that the state should buy all the khadi that may be turned out by the prisons at the cost price. And if there is a surplus, the public may get it at a trifling higher price to cover the expenses of running a sales depot. If my suggestion is adopted, the jails will be linked to the villages and they will spread to them the message of khadi and discharged prisoners may become model citizens of the state.

"I am reminded that salt being a central subject, the ministers cannot do anything. I should be painfully surprised if they cannot. The Central Government has to operate in the provincial territories. Provincial Governments are bound to protect the people within their own jurisdiction against being dealt with unjustly even by the centre. And the Governors are bound to back the protests of their ministers against unjust dealings with the people of their own provinces. If the ministers are on the alert, there should be no difficulty in the poor villagers helping themselves to the salt without undue interference on behalf of the central authority. I have no fear of such undue interference.

"In conclusion, I should like to add that whatsoever I have said about prohibition, education and jails, is presented merely for the consideration of the Congress ministers and the interested public. I may not withhold from the public the views which—however strange, visionary or unpractical they may appear to the critics—I have held tenaciously for long."

Gandhi's increasing participation in the country's affairs led the newspapers to describe his recent writings as the "Instrument of Instructions". "No one but the President of the Congress and the Working Committee," said Gandhi, "has any power to issue instructions to the Congress ministries. Mine is a very humble note. I can only advise on matters about which I may claim special knowledge or experience. My articles have a value only to the extent that they appeal to the reason of those to whom they are addressed. Though I enjoy the confidence of the Working Committee, the views I may express here need not be taken to represent its views or even those of any of its groups. Indeed the public should know that in several matters I do not represent the views of many individual members.

Therefore, whatever I may say in these columns of *Harijan* should be taken to be purely personal to me and in no way representative of the Working Committee.

"But in the matters relating to the struggle for swaraj through non-violent action, I do claim special qualifications. For me, office acceptance has a special meaning even in terms of the Congress manifesto and resolutions. It would be wrong if I did not put before the ministers and the public my meaning of office acceptance. But it may not always be the official Congress view, it may not be the view of Congressmen in general. My position and limitations being made clear, there need be no embarrassment to the ministers or to me. I should feel cramped if my writing were presumed to bear the imprimatur of the official or even the non-official Congress view."

The Working Committee met at Wardha on August 14 to chalk out the general policy to be followed by the Congress ministries, all the Congress premiers participating. Gandhi placed his views about total prohibition before the committee. After a general discussion the following resolution was passed:

"Inasmuch as prohibition has been one of the chief planks of the Congress since the inauguration of the non-co-operation movement in 1920, and thousands of men and women have had to suffer imprisonment and even physical injury in furtherance of this cause, the Working Committee is of opinion that it is incumbent upon the Congress ministries to work to this end. The committee expects them to bring about total prohibition in their respective provinces within three years. The Working Committee appeals to the ministries in the other provinces and to the Indian states also to adopt this programme of moral and social uplift of the people."

The committee recommended the salary of the ministers up to Rs. 500 per month and of the councillors at Rs. 70. Regarding social functions, the committee's instructions were: "All members of the Congress parties in the legislatures should avoid official functions like receptions, farewell to incoming and outgoing Governors, etc. It should be made clear that while the ministers will aim at working in a spirit of utmost harmony with the services, they can take no part in social functions like parties or dinners. The very poverty of the land precludes their taking part in amenities of this nature."

The committee's advice to the minority provinces was that the bills and the resolutions embodying the Congress policy and programme

should be introduced by their party members. "This will educate and familiarize the public with the Congress aims and policies."

Among other resolutions passed at Wardha was one on a hunger-strike in the Andamans, appealing to the prisoners to give it up and asking the Government to discharge the political prisoners and close the penal settlement in the islands.

The Congress appeal and especially Gandhi's request led to the termination of hunger-strike: "Touched by the nation-wide appeal and your message, we suspend hunger-strike on assurance that the whole country has taken up our demand and because we are confidently hoping that within a reasonable period of time you will succeed in getting our demands fulfilled. We feel honoured to inform you and through you the nation that those of us who ever believed in terrorism do not hold to it any more and are convinced of its futility as a political weapon or creed. We declare that it definitely retards rather than advances the cause of our country."

Hailing the Working Committee's resolution on prohibition as the greatest act, Gandhi wrote in *Harijan*:

"The cry of prohibition has been always fashionable. In 1920, it became one of the chief constructive items of the Congress. The Congress, therefore, could not but go in for total prohibition immediately it came into power in any part of India. The ministers had to have the courage to sacrifice nearly eleven crores of rupees of revenue in the six provinces. The Working Committee has taken the risk for the sake of redeeming its pledge and conserving the moral and the material welfare of those who are addicted to intoxicants and narcotics. It is my fervent hope that the five provinces which have non-Congress majorities will not hesitate to follow the example of the six provinces. It is much less difficult for them than for the six provinces to achieve prohibition. And is it too much to expect the states to fall in with British India?

"I know that many are sceptical about prohibition being achieved. They think that the financial lure will be too strong for the ministers to resist. They argue that the addicts will procure their drinks and drugs anyhow, and that when the ministers discover that the prohibition means mere loss of revenue without any appreciable diminution in the consumption, though illicit, of drinks and drugs, they will revert to the tainted revenue and then the state will be worse than the present.

"I do not share any such fear. I believe there is the requisite moral momentum in the nation to achieve the noble end. If prohibition is to be a reality, we shall begin to see the end not with the end of the three years but inside of six months. And when the reality dawns upon India, then those provinces or states that have lagged behind are bound to bow to the inevitable.

"We have the right, therefore, to expect the sympathy and support not only of all the parties in India, including the Europeans, but the best mind of the whole world in this, perhaps, the greatest moral movement of the century.

"If prohibition is to mean a great moral awakening in India, the closing of liquor shops should merely mean the indispensable beginning of the movement ending in the complete weaning from drink and narcotics of those poor people and some rich people whom the habit has ruined, body and soul. Such a consummation cannot be brought about by mere state effort.

"Let me summarize what should, in my opinion, be the comprehensive programme: (1) A drink drug map showing the locality of liquor and opium shops in each province. (2) Closing them as liquor shops on the expiry of the licences. (3) Immediate earmarking of the liquor revenue, whilst it is still being received, exclusively for the purposes of prohibition. (4) Conversion, wherever possible, of the liquor shops into refreshment and recreation rooms in the hope that the original visitors will continue to use them, liquor contractors being themselves persuaded to conduct them if they will. (5) Employment of the existing excise staff for the detection of illicit distillation and drinking. (6) Appeal to the educational institutions to devote a part of the time of teachers and students to temperance work. (7) Appeal to women to organize visits to the persons given to the drink and opium habits. (8) Negotiation with the neighbouring states to undertake simultaneous prohibition. (9) Engaging the voluntary or, if necessary, paid assistance of the medical profession for suggesting the non-alcoholic drinks and other substitutes for intoxicants and the methods of weaning the addicts from their habit. (10) Revival of the activities of temperance associations in support of the campaign against drink. (11) Requiring employers of labour to open and maintain, under first-class management, refreshment, recreation and educational rooms for the use of their employees. (12) Toddy-tappers to be used for drawing sweet toddy for sale,

or conversion into *gur*. I understand that the process of collecting sweet toddy for drinking, as such, or for making *gur* is different from the one for fermenting toddy.

"So much for the campaign against drink and drugs. Now as to how to make up for the loss of revenue in some provinces to the extent of one-third? I have unhesitatingly suggested cutting out the educational budget for which purpose mainly the excise revenue is used. I still maintain that education can be made self-supporting. But it cannot be made so in a day even if the possibility of its being made self-supporting is accepted. The existing obligations have to be met. Therefore, fresh sources of revenue have to be tapped. Death-duties, tax on tobacco, including *bidis*, have already been given as some suggestions. If these are considered impossible of immediate accomplishment, short-term loans may be devised to tide over the deficit and if even that fails the Central Government should be approached to curtail the military budget and to give the provinces the proportionate grant. The demand would be irresistible, especially, if it is demonstrated by the provincial Governments that they do not need the military, at any rate, for their internal peace and tranquillity."

With regard to other vices such as gambling and prostitution, he observed: "In the provinces where the Congress has a majority, all kinds of hopes have been raised. Some are legitimate and will, no doubt, be fulfilled. Some others cannot be. Thus the people who indulge in gambling, which unfortunately is ever on the increase in the Bombay Presidency, think that gambling will be legalized and the surreptitious dens that cover Bombay will be no longer required. I am not quite sure that even if gambling is legalized on a universal scale, as it is in a restricted manner, there will be no illegal dens. Thus it has been suggested that the Turf Club, which has the monopoly of gambling on the racecourse, should be allowed to open an additional entrance to make it easier for the poor people to gamble. The bait offered is a larger revenue. A similar suggestion has been made for the regulation and licensing of the brothels. The argument advanced, as in all such cases, is that the vice will continue whether it is legalized or not and, therefore, it is better to legalize it and make it safe for those who visit the brothels. Let me hope that the ministers will not fall in this trap. The proper method of dealing with the brothels is for women to carry on a double propaganda, (a) amongst the women who sell their honour for livelihood, and (b) amongst the

men whom they must shame into behaving better towards the sisters whom they ignorantly or insolently call the weaker sex. I remember years and years ago in the early nineties when the brave Salvation Army people, at the risk of their own lives, used to carry on picketing at the corners of notorious streets of Bombay which were filled with the houses of ill-fame. There is no reason why some such thing should not be organized on a large scale. As for gambling on the racecourse, it is, so far as I am aware, an importation like many other importations from the West, and if I had my way, I would withdraw the protection of the law that gambling on the racecourse enjoys even to the extent it does. The Congress programme being one of self-purification, as is stated in so many words in the resolution of 1920, the Congress can have nothing to do with the income derived from any vice. The ministers will, therefore, use the authority that they have obtained for educating the public opinion in the right direction and for stopping gambling in high quarters. It is useless to hope that the unwary public will not copy bad manners of the so-called high-placed people. I have heard it argued that horse-racing is necessary for breeding good horses. There may be truth in this. Is it not possible to have horse-racing without gambling or is gambling also an aid to the good breeding of horses?"

On August 21, Gandhi wrote under "The Implications": "The salaries and the allowances are now a settled fact. The question now is, will the ministers, their secretaries and the members work so hard as to deserve the emoluments they will receive? Will the members become the whole-time workers for the nation and give a faithful account of the services they may render? Let us not make the mistake of imagining that the things are what we wish them to be or what they should be.

"And it is not enough that the ministers live simply and work hard. They have to see to it that the departments they control also respond. Thus justice should become cheap and expeditious. Today it is the luxury of the rich and the joy of the gambler. Police should be friends of the people, instead of being their dread. Education should be so revolutionized as to answer the wants of the poorest villager instead of answering those of an imperial exploiter.

"All those who were imprisoned for political offences even of a violent nature will shortly find themselves free, if the ministers can give them the freedom. Does it mean passport to violence? Certainly

not in terms of the Congress creed of non-violence. The Congress abhors individual violence in a far more real sense than the Government it replaces. It seeks to meet the violence of individuals not with the organized violence called punishment, but with non-violence in the shape of friendly approach to erring individuals and through the cultivation of sound public opinion against any form of violence. Its methods are preventive, and not punitive. In other words, the Congress will rule not through the police backed by the military but through its moral authority based upon the greatest goodwill of the people. It will rule not in virtue of authority derived from a superior armed power but in virtue of the service of the people whom it seeks to represent in everyone of its actions.

"Ban on all prohibited literature is being removed. Now some of the books banned will be found, I suppose, to inculcate violence and spread obscenity or fomenting of hatred. Again the Congress will rely upon the unstinted support of the enlightened public opinion in dealing with objectionable literature. The ministers who may find violence, hatred or obscenity spreading in their provinces will look to the Congress organizations and ultimately the Working Committee for active and efficient help before they resort to the processes of the criminal law and all it means. Indeed the triumph of the Congress will be measured by the success it achieves in rendering the police and military practically idle. And it will fail utterly if it has to face crisis that render the use of the police and military inevitable. The best and the only effective way to wreck the existing constitution is for the Congress to prove conclusively that it can rule without the aid of the military and with the least possible assistance of the police who may well have some new and friendly designation."

The meaning of office acceptance Gandhi succinctly put in *Harijan* dated September 4:

"Rightly or wrongly, since 1920, the Congress-minded millions have firmly held up the view that the British domination of India has been on the whole a curse. It has been as much sustained by British arms as it has been through the legislatures, distribution of titles, the law courts, the educational institutions, the financial policy, and the like. The Congress came to the conclusion that the guns should not be feared, but that the organized violence of which the British guns were a naked emblem, should be met by the organized non-violence of the people, and that the legislatures and the rest by

non-co-operating with them. There was a strong and effective positive side to the foregoing plan of non-co-operation, which became known as the constructive programme. The nation succeeded to the exact extent of its success in the programme of action laid down in 1920.

"Now this policy has never changed and not even the terms have been revoked by the Congress. In my opinion, all the resolutions since passed by the Congress are not a repudiation but a fulfilment of the original, so long as the mentality behind all of them remains the same as in 1920.

"The corner-stone of the policy of 1920 was organized national non-violence. The British system was wooden, even satanic; not so the men and women behind the system. Our non-violence, therefore, meant that we were out to convert the administrators of the system, not to destroy them; the conversion may or may not be willing. If, notwithstanding their desire to the contrary, they saw that their guns and everything that they had created for the consolidation of their authority were useless because of our non-use of them, they could not do otherwise than bow to the inevitable and either retire from the scene, or remain on our terms, that is, as friends to co-operate with us, not as rulers to impose their will upon us.

"If Congressmen have entered the legislatures and have accepted office with that mentality, and if the British administrators tolerate Congress ministries indefinitely, the Congress will be on a fair way to wreck the act and to achieve complete independence. For, an indefinite prolongation of the ministries on the terms mentioned by me means an ever-increasing power of the Congress till it becomes irresistible and is able to have its way all along the line. The first indispensable condition of the attainment of such a consummation means the willing exercise of non-violence by the whole mass of the people. That means perfect communal co-operation and friendship, eradication of untouchability, willing restraint of the addicts to the drink and opium habits, the social enfranchisement of women, the progressive amelioration of the toiling millions in the villages, free and compulsory primary education—not in name as it is today, but in reality, as I have ventured to adumbrate—the gradual eradication of superstition of proved harmfulness, through adult mass education, a complete overhauling of the system of higher education so as to answer the wants of the millions instead of the few middle

class people, a radical change in the legal machinery so as to make justice pure and inexpensive, conversion of jails into reformatories in which detention would be not a course of punishment but a complete course of education of those miscalled convicts, but who are in fact temporarily deranged.

"This is not conceived as a terribly long plan of action. Every one of the items suggested by me can be put into motion today, without let or hindrance, if we have the will.

"I had not studied the act when I advised office acceptance. But the three months' self-denial of the Congress has changed the atmosphere. I see nothing in the act to prevent Congress ministers from undertaking the programme suggested by me. The special powers and safeguards come into play only when there is violence in the country, or a clash between minorities and the so-called majority community, which is another word for violence.

"I detect in the act a profound distrust of the nation's capacity to rule itself, running through every section, and an inevitable desire to perpetuate British rule, but at the same time a bold experiment of wooing the masses to the British side, and, failing that, a resignation to their will to reject British domination. The Congress has gone in to convert these missionaries. And I have not a shadow of doubt that if the Congress is true to the spirit of non-violence and non-co-operation and self-purification, it will succeed in its mission."

"A conscientious minister," Gandhi observed, "has no time for receiving addresses and honours, or for making speeches in return for fulsome or deserved praise. Nor have they time for interviewing whom they do not invite, or who they think are not going to help them in their work. In theory, a leader of democracy holds himself at the beck and call of the public. It is but right that he should do so. But he dare not do so at the sacrifice of the duty imposed upon him by the public. The ministers will cut a sorry figure, if they don't master the work entrusted to them. An education minister has to have all his wits about him if he is to evolve a policy in keeping with the requirements of the country. An excise minister will prove a disastrous failure if he does not attend to the constructive side of prohibition. And so will a finance minister who, in spite of handicap created for him by the India Act, and in spite of the voluntary surrender of the excise revenue, will not balance his budget. It requires a juggler in figures to be able to do so. These are but illustrations.

Their gesture of simplicity, necessary as it was as a preliminary, will avail them nothing if they will not show requisite industry, ability, integrity, impartiality, and an infinite capacity for mastering the details. It would be well, therefore, if the public will exercise self-restraint in the matter of giving addresses or seeking interviews or writing to them long epistles."

"In the greater part of India the Congress is both in office and power," stated Gandhi. "It is true that the power is limited. But it is limited in terms of Complete Independence, not otherwise. India is one vast prison with high walls of suppression clothing her mind and body. But its superintendent has seen fit to give a large part of the prisoners the power to appoint from among themselves the governing officials with the full powers of administration, at any rate, enough for growing strong, so long as they recognize that they have chosen to take advantage of this freedom in hope that by never requiring the assistance of his admitted physical superiority they will convince the superintendent that he is no longer wanted. Anyway, that being my interpretation of the Government of India Act and office acceptance, I must try to show to the co-workers, who have become ministers, how, in my opinion, they can achieve the end."

"My participation in the Congress affairs," he said, "is confined to tendering advice on the issues involved in office acceptance and in the policies to be pursued in the prosecution of our march to the goal of Complete Independence. The offices have to be held lightly, not tightly. They are or should be crowns of thorns, never of renown. Offices have been taken in order to see if they enable us to quicken the pace at which we are moving towards our goal."

Basic Education

1937

GANDHI's ideas on education met with stubborn opposition. He was accused of neglect of literacy. "There is nothing in what I have said to warrant such a belief," Gandhi emphasized. "For, have I not contended that the children in the schools of my conception will receive every instruction through the handicrafts they may be taught? That includes literacy. In my scheme of things the hand will handle tools before it draws or traces the writing. The eyes will read the pictures of letters and words as they will know other things in life, the ears will catch the names and the meanings of things and sentences. The whole training will be natural, responsive, and, therefore, the quickest and the cheapest in the land. The children of my school will, therefore, read much more quickly than they will write. And when they write they will not produce daubs as I do even now, thanks to my teachers, but they will trace correct letters even as they will trace correct figures of the object they see. If the schools of my conception ever come into being, I make bold to say that they will vie with the most advanced schools in quickness, so far as reading is concerned, and even writing, if it is common ground that the writing must be correct and not incorrect as now in the vast majority of cases."

Gandhi was proposing a method of tuition embodying Rousseau's maxim, "Do as much as possible of your teaching by doing, and fall back on words only when doing is out of the question." Many, however, thought that he was preaching manual work as an alternative to other studies rather than as a basis of instruction, and he had to explain patiently.

"I am afraid," he wrote to a colleague, "you have not sufficiently grasped the principle that spinning, carding, etc., should be means of intellectual training. What is being done there is that it is a supplementary course to the intellectual course. I want you to appreciate the difference between the two. A carpenter teaches me carpentry.

I shall learn it mechanically from him, and as a result I shall know the use of various tools, but that will hardly develop my intellect. But if the same thing is taught to me by one who has taken a scientific training in carpentry, he will stimulate my intellect too. Not only shall I then have become an expert carpenter but also engineer. For the expert will have taught me mathematics and also told me the differences between various kinds of timber and the place where they come from, giving me thus a knowledge of geography and also a little knowledge of agriculture. And he will also have taught me to draw models of my tools, and giving me a knowledge of elementary geometry and arithmetic. It is likely that you do not correlate the manual work with the intellectual training which is given exclusively through reading and writing. I must confess that all I have up to now said is that manual training must be given side by side with intellectual training, and that it should have a principal place in national education. But now I say that the principal means of stimulating the intellect should be manual training. I have come to this conclusion because the intellect of our boys is being wasted. Our boys do not know what to do on leaving schools. True education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of the children. This education ought to be for them a kind of insurance against unemployment."

He went on to make the startling proposal that such a system of education should aim at becoming self-sufficient at least as to its running costs. "If the state takes charge of the children between seven and fourteen, and trains their bodies and minds through productive labour, the public schools must be frauds and teachers idiots, if they cannot become self-supporting," he observed.

"It is by making children return to the state a part of what they receive from it that I propose to make education self-supporting," he explained to a Congress minister. "I should combine into one what you call now the primary education and secondary or high-school education. It is my conviction that our children get nothing more than a half-baked knowledge of English, besides superficial knowledge of mathematics, history and geography, some of which they had learnt in their language in the primary classes. If you cut out English from the curriculum altogether, without cutting out the subjects you teach, you can make the children go through the whole course in seven years instead of eleven, besides giving them manual

work whereby they can make a fair return to the state. But this manual work will have to be the very centre of the whole thing. I say that the development of mind should come through the manual training. The manual training will not consist in producing articles for a school museum, or toys which have no value. It should produce marketable articles. The children will not do this as children used to do under the whip in the early days of the factories. The children will do it because it entertains them and stimulates their intellect. You must make a start and prepare the teachers whilst you go through the process."

Gandhi sounded a warning against the assumption that the idea of self-supporting education sprang from the necessity of achieving total prohibition as soon as possible. "Both are independent necessities," he remarked. "You have to start with the conviction that total prohibition has to be achieved, revenue or no revenue, education or no education. Similarly, you have to start with the conviction that looking to the needs of the villages our rural education ought to be made self-supporting if it is to be compulsory."

"I have the first conviction deep down in me," an educationist said. "Prohibition to me is an end in itself, and I regard it as a great education in itself. I should, therefore, sacrifice education altogether to make prohibition a success. But the other conviction is lacking. I cannot yet believe that education can be made self-supporting."

"There, too, I want you to start with the conviction," said Gandhi. "The ways and means will come as you begin to work it out. I regret that I woke up to the necessity of this at this very late age. Otherwise I should have made the experiment myself. Even now, God willing, I shall do what I can to show that it can be self-supporting. But my time has been taken up by other things all these years, equally important perhaps, but it is this stay in Segaon that brought the conviction home to me. We have up to now concentrated on stuffing children's minds with all kinds of information, without ever thinking of stimulating and developing them. Let us cry a halt and concentrate on educating the child properly through manual work, not as a side activity, but as the prime means of intellectual training."

"I see that too. But why should it also support the school?"

"That will be the test of its value. The child at the age of fourteen, that is, after finishing a seven years' course, should be discharged as an earning unit. Even now the poor people's children automatically

lend a helping hand to their parents—the feeling at the back of their minds being, what shall my parents eat and what shall they give me to eat if I do not also work with them? That is an education in itself. Even so the state takes charge of the child at seven and returns it to the family as an earning unit. You impart education and simultaneously cut at the root of unemployment. You have to train the boy in one occupation or another. And round this special occupation you will train up his mind, his body, his handwriting, his artistic sense, and so on. He will be master of the craft he learns."

"But supposing a boy takes up the art and science of making khadi. Do you think it must occupy him seven years to master the craft?"

"Yes, it must, if he will not learn it mechanically. Why do we give years to the study of history or to the study of languages? Is a craft any the less important than these subjects which have been up to now given an artificial importance?"

"But as you have been mainly thinking of spinning and weaving, evidently you are thinking of making of these schools so many weaving schools. A child may have no aptitude for weaving and may have it for something else."

"Quite so. Then we will teach him some other craft. But you must know that one school will not teach many crafts. The idea is that we should have one teacher for twenty-five boys, and you may have as many classes or schools of twenty-five boys as you have the teachers available, and have each of these schools specializing in a separate craft—carpentry, smithy, tanning, shoe-making. Only you must bear in mind the fact that you develop the child's mind through each of these crafts. And I would emphasize one more thing. You must forget the cities and concentrate on the villages. They are an ocean. The cities are a mere drop in the ocean. That is why you cannot think of subjects like brick-making. If they must be civil and mechanical engineers, they will after the seven years' course go to the special colleges meant for these higher and specialized courses.

"And let me emphasize one more fact. We are apt to think lightly of the village crafts because we have divorced educational from the manual training. Manual work has been regarded as something inferior, and owing to the wretched distortion of the *varna* we came to regard the spinners and weavers and carpenters and shoe-makers, as belonging to the inferior castes, the proletariat. And we have had no Cromptons and no Hargreaves, because of this vicious system of

considering crafts as something inferior, divorced from the skilled. If they had been regarded as callings, having an independent status of their own equal to the status that learning enjoyed, we should have had great inventors from among our craftsmen. Of course, the 'Spinning Jenny' led on to the discovery of water-power and other things which made the mill displace labour of thousands of people. That was a monstrosity. We will by concentrating on the villages see that the inventive skill and intensive learning of the craft will stimulate, will subserve the needs of the villagers as a whole."

Along with the manual training, he recommended the teaching of music in schools. "The modulation of voice," he observed, "is as necessary as the training of the hand. Physical drill, handicrafts, drawing and music should go hand in hand in order to draw the best out of the boys and girls and create in them a real interest in their tuition. That this means a revolution in the system is admitted. If the future citizens of the state are to build a sure foundation for life's work, these four things are necessary. One has only to visit any primary school to have a striking demonstration of slovenliness and disorderliness and discordant speech. I have no doubt, therefore, that when the education ministers in the several provinces recast the system of education and make it answer the requirements of the country, they will not omit the essentials to which I have drawn attention. My plan of primary education certainly comprises these things which easily become possible the moment you remove from the children's shoulders the burden of having to master a difficult foreign language."

Gandhi appealed to the critics to be bold and helpful: "Having spoken strongly in 1920 against the present system of education, and having got the opportunity of influencing, however little it may be, the ministers in seven provinces, who have been fellow workers and fellow sufferers in the glorious struggle for freedom of the country, I have felt an irresistible call to make good the charge that the present mode of education is radically wrong from bottom to top. And what I have been struggling to express in these columns very inadequately has come upon me like a flash, and the truth of it is daily growing upon me. And I do, therefore, venture to ask the educationists of the country, who have no axes to grind, and who have an open mind, to study the two propositions that I have laid down, without allowing their preconceived and settled notions about the existing mode of

education to interfere with the free flow of their reason. I would urge them not to allow my utter ignorance of education, in its technical and orthodox sense, to prejudice them against what I have been saying and writing. Wisdom, it is said, often comes from the mouths of babes and sucklings. It may be a poetic exaggeration, but there is no doubt that sometimes it does come through the babes. Experts polish it and give it a scientific shape. I, therefore, ask for an examination of my propositions purely on merits. Let me restate them here, not as I have previously laid them down, but in the language that occurs to me as I am dictating these lines: (1) Primary education, extending over a period of seven years or longer, and covering all the subjects up to the matriculation standard, except English, plus a vocation used as the vehicle for drawing out the minds of boys and girls in all departments of knowledge, should take the place of what passes today under the name of primary, middle and high school education. (2) Such education, taken as a whole, can and must be self-supporting; in fact, self-support is the acid test of its reality."

A momentous session of the Educational Conference commenced at Wardha on October 22, 1937. The proceedings were conducted in Hindustani. Dr. Zakir Husain and Aryanayakam, Congress ministers and many distinguished people participated in the conference, which sat for three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon for two days. In his inaugural presidential address, lasting over one hour, Gandhi said:

"The ideas that I wish to place before you today are new in their method of presentation at least to me, although my experience behind those ideas is very old. The proposition that I wish to put forward refer to both primary and college education. But we will have to give special consideration to primary education. I have included also secondary in primary education, because primary education is the only education so called that is available to a very small fraction of the people in our villages, many of which I have seen during my peregrinations since 1925. I have seen, perhaps, more than anybody else, the conditions of the Indian villages. I gained good experience of the rural life of South Africa as well. I know fully well the type of education that is given in the Indian villages. And now that I have settled down in Segaon I can study the whole problem of national education from closer quarters. I am convinced that if we wish to ameliorate the rural conditions, we must combine secondary with

primary education. The educational scheme, that we wish to place before the country must be primarily for the villages. I have no experience of college education, though I have come in contact with hundreds of college boys, have had heart-to-heart chats and correspondence with them, know their needs, failings and diseases they suffer from. But we must restrict ourselves to a consideration of primary education. For, the moment the primary question is solved, the secondary one of college education will be solved easily.

"I am convinced that the present system of primary education is not only wasteful but positively harmful. Most of the boys are lost to the parents and to the occupation to which they are born. They pick up evil habits, affect the urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education. What then should be the form of primary education? I think the remedy lies in educating them by means of vocational or manual training. I have some experience of it myself, having trained my sons and other children on Tolstoy Farm in South Africa through some manual training, that is, carpentry or shoe-making which I learned from Kallenbach, who had his training in a Trappist Monastery. My sons and all children, I am confident, have lost nothing, though I could not give them an education that either satisfied me or them, as the time at my disposal was limited and my preoccupations were numerous.

"But the scheme that I wish to place before you today is not the teaching of some handicrafts side by side with so-called liberal education. I want that the whole education should be imparted through some handicrafts or industry. It might be objected that in the Middle Ages only handicrafts were taught to the students; but the occupational training, then, was far from serving an educational purpose. The crafts were taught only for the sake of the crafts, without any attempt to develop the intellect as well. In this age those born to certain professions had forgotten them, had taken to clerical careers, and were lost to the countryside. As a result, it is now impossible to find an efficient carpenter or smith in an average village. The handicrafts were nearly lost and the spinning wheel being neglected was taken to Lancashire where it was developed, thanks to the English genius, to an extent that is seen today. This, I say, irrespective of my views on industrialism.

"The remedy lies in imparting the whole art and science of a craft through practical training, and therethrough imparting the whole

education. Teaching of *takli*-spinning for instance, presupposes imparting of knowledge of various varieties of cotton, different soils in different provinces of India, the history of the ruin of the handicraft, its political reasons, which will include the history of the British rule in India, knowledge of arithmetic and so on. I am trying the same experiment on my own little grandson who scarcely feels that he is being taught, for he all the while plays, laughs and sings. I am especially mentioning the *takli* and emphasizing its utility, because I have realized its power and its romance; also because the handicraft of making cloth is the only one which can be taught throughout the country and because the *takli* is very cheap. If you have any other suitable handicraft to suggest, please do so without any hesitation, so that we might consider it as well. I am convinced that *takli* is the only practical solution of our problem, considering the deplorable economic condition prevailing in the country. The constructive programme of khadi since 1920 has led to the formation of Congress ministries in seven provinces, and their success also would depend on the extent to which we carry it out.

"I have placed the scheme before the ministers; it is for them to accept it or to reject it. But my advice is that the primary education should centre round the *takli*. During the first year every thing should be taught through *takli*; in the second year, other processes can also be taught side by side. It will also be possible to earn quite enough through *takli* because there will be sufficient demand for the cloth produced by the children. Even the parents of the children will be sufficient to consume the products of their children. I have contemplated a seven years' course which so far as *takli* is concerned would culminate in the practical knowledge of weaving including dyeing, designing, etc.

"I am very keen on finding the expenses of a teacher through the product of the manual work of his pupils, because I am convinced that there is no other way to carry education to crores of our children. We cannot wait until we have the necessary revenue and until the Viceroy reduces the military expenditure. You should bear in mind that this primary education would include the elementary principles of sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, of doing their own work, helping parents at home, etc. The present generation of boys know no cleanliness, no self-help, and are physically weak. I would, therefore, give compulsory physical training through musical drill.

"I have been accused of being opposed to literary training. Far from it, I simply want to show the way in which it should be given. The self-supporting aspect has also been attacked. It is said, whereas we should be expending millions on primary education we are going to exploit the children. It is also feared that there would be enormous waste. This fear is falsified by experience. As for exploiting or burdening the children, I would ask whether it was burdening the child to save him from a disaster? *Takli* is a good enough toy to play with. It is no less a toy because it is a productive one. Even today children help their parents to a certain extent. The Segaon children know the details of agriculture better than I, for having worked with their parents on the fields. Whilst the child will be encouraged to spin and help his parents with agricultural jobs, he will also be made to feel that he does not belong only to his parents but to the village also and to the country, and that he must make some return to them. That is the only way. I would tell the ministers that they make the children helpless by doling out education to them. They would make them self-confident and brave by their paying for their own education by their own labour. This system is to be common to all Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians. Why do I not lay any stress on religious instruction, people ask. Because I am teaching them practical religion, the religion of self-help.

"The state is bound to find employment if needed, for all the pupils thus trained. As for teachers, Prof. Shah has suggested conscription. He has demonstrated its value by citing Italy and other lands.

"If Mussolini could impress the youth of Italy for the service of his country, why should not we? Was it fair to label as slavery the compulsory enlistment of service of our youth for a year or longer before they began their career? The youths had contributed a lot to the success of the movement for freedom during the past seventeen years, and I would call upon them to freely give a year of their lives to the service of the nation. Legislation, if it was necessary in this respect, would not be compulsion, as it could not be passed without the consent of the majority of our representatives.

"I would, therefore, ask them to say whether this imparting of education through manual training appealed to them. For me to make it self-supporting would be a real test of its efficiency. The children ought, at the end of seven years, be able to pay for their instruction and be earning units.

"College education was largely an urban proposition. I would not say that it was an unmitigated failure, as the primary education was, but the results were fairly disappointing. Why should any one of the graduates have to be unemployed?

"*Takli* I had proposed as a concrete instance because Vinoba had the largest amount of practical experience in it, and he was there to answer their objections, if any. Kakasaheb would also be able to tell them something, although his experience was more theoretical than practical. He has especially drawn my attention to Armstrong's *Education For Life*, especially the chapter on 'Education of the Hand'. Madhusudan Das was a lawyer, but he was convinced that without the use of our hands and feet, our brains would be atrophied, and even if it worked it would be the home of Satan. Tolstoy had taught the same lesson through many of his tales."

Gandhi concluded by inviting the attention of the audience to the very fundamentals of his plan of the self-supporting education: "We have communal quarrels—not that they are peculiar to us. England had also its Wars of the Roses, and today British imperialism is the enemy of the world. If we want to eliminate communal strife, we must start on the education I have adumbrated. That plan springs out of non-violence. I suggested it in connection with the nation's resolve to effect complete prohibition. I may tell you that even if there was to be no loss of revenue, and our exchequer was full, this education would be a *sine qua non* if we did not want to urbanize our boys. We have to make them true representatives of our culture and civilization, of the true genius of our nation. We cannot do so otherwise than by giving them a course of self-supporting primary education. Europe is no example for us. It plans its programmes in terms of violence, because it believes in violence. I would be the last to minimize the achievement of Russia, but the whole structure is based on force and violence. If India has resolved to eschew violence, this system of education becomes an integral part of the discipline she has to go through. We are told that England spends millions on education, America also does so, but we forget that all that wealth is obtained through exploitation. And they have reduced the art of exploitation to science, and they might well give their boys the costly education they do. We cannot, will not, think in terms of exploitation, and we have no alternative but this plan of education which is based on non-violence."

The subject then was discussed threadbare. Dr. Zakir Husain said: "Mahatmaji thinks that the scheme which he has placed before you is absolutely original, and that it can be accepted only by those who believe in non-violence and in rural civilization. But those who are working in educational field will not find Mahatmaji's scheme very new. They know that true learning can be imparted only through doing. This method is called the Project Method in America and the Complex Method in Russia. We can certainly impart education to our children through the *takli* and the charkha and some other suitable handicrafts. But the greatest difficulty in carrying out this scheme will be the paucity of trained teachers. Professor Dewey in America had a similar plan which was welcomed enthusiastically but he had to close down his school in three years because he had no men to run it." He uttered a warning against placing too much emphasis on the self-supporting aspect of education: "Teachers may become slave-drivers and exploit the labour of the poor boys. If this happens, *takli* would prove worse than the books and we shall be laying the foundations of hidden slavery in our country."

Professor Shah said it was no use deluding oneself that education could be made self-supporting. If there was free service, those who gave free service would be paid from elsewhere. Ultimately all the expense was borne by the nation. It was all right to a certain extent to emphasize manual work, but it should not be forgotten that the present age was a machine age. The question was not of increasing our production but of equitable distribution of wealth. Then there was the question of giving boys material free, marketing it free and so on, giving rise to unequal competition with professional artisans. The ideal state of things visualized under the proposal could come, if there was a complete boycott of foreign goods and an embargo on all machine-made articles. That was an impossibility. All industry would have to be nationalized and socialized. It was idle, and even improper, to make education self-supporting.

In the afternoon, Gandhi opened the session with answering some of the criticisms:

"By means of the scheme which I placed before you in the morning we can make our boys self-confident and courageous. *Takli* will not be the only thing that will be taught during the seven years. In the first year we should teach boys a little carding, even before the *takli*. Then the boys should be taught the collecting of cotton in the

fields. After this they can be taught spinning, first with *takli* and then with charkha. After spinning, the making of the *takli* and charkha should also be taught to the students. They can learn carpentry and smithy as well. Thus, if we plan out the whole course during the seven years, the scheme is bound to succeed.

"Professor Shah thinks that this scheme will create unequal and unjust competition between the professional artisans and schoolboys. To my mind there is no cause for such fear; and if there will be any competition it will be first with the mills and then with the Spinners' Association. Both the mills and the Charkha Sangh, I am sure, are not afraid of such competition. You also forget that my scheme is meant specially for the villages. When the ministers will create a suitable atmosphere in the country, people would like to buy the school products even by paying higher price. This is how there will be no difficulty in marketing the school products. So far as cloth is concerned, I think that the state will have to buy all the necessary cloth from the schools even though at a higher rate. For example, take the printing press in Yeravda jail. Although its rates are higher than the other local presses, the Government does all their printing there, and the question of competition does not arise at all. Our work has to be done in the same way.

"In the beginning there is bound to be some waste in the village schools; but a clever and tactful teacher will see that the boys learn most with least waste. It is true that the articles produced in these schools would not be so cheap as those produced outside. But, as in the case of khadi, there will be no problem of competition. Even in the villages, nobody needs be afraid of any competition with the school articles. Take paper, for example. This cottage industry has almost disappeared from the villages. The A.-I.V.I.A. is trying to revive it at some places. And people like to buy it even though at a higher price. In the same way the public would buy the articles produced by the school children. The same thing will happen in the case of *gur*-making of palms. As palm-*gur*-making is not prevalent in the country, there will be no problem of competition with the professional *gur*-makers who use sugarcane as their raw material.

"Then, take the question of machinery. I wish that machinery is not necessary for us at all. We should use khadi; and, therefore, we do not require mills. We should try to produce all the necessary cloth in villages, and we need not be the slaves of machines. I am afraid,

by working with the machines we have become machines ourselves, having lost all sense of art and hand work. If you still think that we cannot do without machines, the scheme that I have placed before you will be futile. You wish to keep our villages alive by means of machines and think of imparting education to the village children through them. I am confident that this would be impossible in our country. Machines will only help in making all the thirty-five crores of people unemployed. If you think that machines are really indispensable, you must reject my scheme and suggest a new one.

"Dr. Zakir Husain has told us of the failure of Professor Dewey's scheme in America. I think he could not succeed in his scheme not because it was very expensive, but because he could not work it on a large scale. My scheme is absolutely different, because it is a rural one. It is said that my scheme will bring about slavery in the schools. This can be said about all good things; in bad hands even the good things become bad. I do not wish that my scheme should be carried out by those who have neither the faith nor the confidence.

"I wish to make one more point clear. I do not want to teach the village children only handicrafts. I want to teach through hand work all the subjects like history, geography, arithmetic, science, language, painting, music. All this teaching will have to be done according to a definite plan. Dr. Bhagwat has suggested nine hours daily for school work; but I do not agree with him because I do not want to be cruel to the children. I want only five hours daily, because I am sure the boys will also practise for some time at home what they are taught in schools. I am confident that if we make calculations for the seven years together, we shall find that education can be self-supporting. In the first year if each boy is able to earn two pice a day, he will be able to earn one anna the next year. In this way their power of production would go on increasing, and they shall be able to earn their living in later life.

"It has been suggested that agriculture should be the medium of instruction in the village schools. But the shame of it is that we have not the necessary means. Agriculture as it is taught at present in schools and colleges is useless for our villages. Because it is not intimately related to the rural conditions. But if you accept my scheme and are able to find suitable teachers, I am sure it would be very useful for the village folk. Students also will go with their teachers to the fields and learn many new subjects while ploughing, sowing,

irrigating, and weeding the fields. They will have sufficient physical exercise, and artificial exercises, therefore, would be unnecessary.

"I also think that there might be some waste in the first year of my scheme; but it is bound to be self-supporting in the third year. I say this from personal experience. There is no danger of slavery because there would be no room for it. Of course, if all the teachers and the inspectors are worthless, there is no hope.

"You should not accept anything out of your regard for me. I am near the death's door and would not dream of thrusting anything down peoples' throats. The scheme should be accepted after full and mature consideration, so that it may not have to be given up after a little while. I am not very particular about the duration; it may be seven years or nine years. I agree with Prof. Shah that a state is not worth anything if it cannot provide for its unemployed. But providing doles is not the solution of unemployment. I would provide every one of them with work and give them food, if not money. God did not create us to eat, drink and be merry, but to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow. There should be no dearth of work in our country, when we have thirty crores of living machines. Why should we depend on the dead ones? I say that each of us must work eight hours a day. Nobody becomes a slave by working. Just as we do not become the slaves of our parents at home when we carry out their instructions, so the question of slavery should not arise at all in our proposed schools. But if you insist on machines, I feel quite helpless, because I have no other scheme to suggest."

Vinoba Bhave was next invited to speak. He said the proposition that the primary education should be free and self-supporting had seemed to him to be self-evident the moment he read it. It may not be a new thing, but it was presented in a new light. He was sure that all the ills of the world sprang from man having given up manual work, and the revolutionary proposal would cancel them at a stroke. Giving his own experience, Vinoba said: "I have an industrial home at Nalwadi where boys from four to five miles are coming to do their eight hours' spinning between seven to eleven and one to five. They have to leave home early in the morning; to give them their day's meal their mothers have to get up at a very early morning hour. When I examine the life they lead, I find enough to learn therefrom. Legislation making education compulsory will not solve the problem. The problem will be solved only when we enable the children at the

end of seven years to add substantially to the income of the home. The school atmosphere has to be revolutionized—children's books, their posture, their way of walking and talking, and so on. Most schools are nothing but dusty, dirty floors. It is absurd to suggest that schoolmasters will be slave-drivers. Far from it! The schools will automatically evoke an unprecedented interest in the parents, who will keep a vigilant watch on them. The state, of course, will have to produce ideal teachers and necessary text-books."

After the first day's proceedings the conference converted itself into a committee to express its opinion on the following propositions originally formulated by Gandhi:

"1. The present system of education does not meet the requirements of the country in any shape or form. English, having been made the medium of instruction in all the higher branches of learning, has created a permanent bar between the highly educated few and the uneducated many. It has prevented knowledge from percolating to the masses. This excessive importance given to English has cast upon the educated class a burden which has maimed them mentally for life and made them strangers in their own land. Absence of vocational training has made the educated class unfit for productive work and harmed them physically. Money spent on primary education is a waste of expenditure inasmuch as what little is taught is soon forgotten and has little or no value in terms of the villages or cities. Such advantage as is gained by the existing system of education is not gained by the chief taxpayer, his children getting the least.

"2. The course of primary education should be extended at least to seven years and should include the general knowledge gained up to the matriculation standard less English and plus a vocation.

"3. For the all-round development of boys and girls, all training should so far as possible be given through a profit-yielding vocation. In other words, vocations should serve a double purpose—to enable the pupil to pay for his tuition through the products of his labour, and the same time to develop the whole man or woman in him or her through the vocation learnt at school.

"Land, buildings and equipment are not intended to be covered by the proceeds of the pupils' labour.

"All the process of cotton, wool and silk, commencing from gathering, cleaning, ginning (in the case of cotton), carding, spinning, dyeing, sizing, wrap-making, double-twisting, designing, and weaving,

embroidery, tailoring, paper-making, cutting, bookbinding, cabinet-making, toy-making, *gur*-making are undoubted occupations that can easily be learnt and handled without much capital outlay.

"This primary education should equip boys and girls to earn their bread by the state guaranteeing employment in the vocations learnt or by buying their manufactures at prices fixed by the state.

"4. Higher education should be left to private enterprise and for meeting national requirements, whether in the various industries, technical arts, belles-lettres or fine arts. The state universities should be purely examining bodies, self-supporting through the fees charged for examinations.

"Universities will look after the whole of the field of education and will prepare and approve courses of studies in various departments of education. No private school should be run without the previous sanction of the respective universities. University charters should be given liberally to any body of persons of proved worth and integrity, it being always understood that the universities will not cost the state anything except that it will bear the cost of running a central education department."

The next day the draft resolutions of the committee were placed before the house and discussed and ultimately passed: "(1) That in the opinion of this conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale. (2) That the medium of instruction be mother tongue. (3) That the conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should centre around some form of manual and productive work, and that all the other abilities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child. (4) That the conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers."

Commenting on the Educational Conference, Gandhi wrote under "A Step Forward":

"It marks an important stage in the presentation of my plan to the public and Congress ministers. It was a happy augury that so many ministers attended. The objection and criticism centred round the idea of self-support even in the narrow sense I have mentioned. Therefore, the conference has made the very cautious declaration

it has. There is no doubt that the conference had to sail on an unchartered sea. There was no complete precedent before it. If the idea is sound, it will work itself out in practice. After all it is for those who have faith in the self-support part to demonstrate it by working schools in accordance with the idea.

"There was a remarkable unanimity so far as the question went of imparting full primary education including the secondary course less English through a vocation. The fact that the whole person in the boys and girls has to be developed through a vocation automatically saves the schools from degenerating into factories. For over and above the required degree of proficiency in the vocation in which they are trained, boys and girls will have to show equal proficiency in the other subjects they will be expected to learn.

" Zakir Husain Committee's labours will show how the scheme can be worked in practice and what exactly the boys and girls will be expected to know from year to year.

"Objection has been raised that the conference's resolutions were a foregone conclusion. It has no validity. In the nature of things it was impossible to invite educationists at random to pronounce their views all of a sudden on what to them is undoubtedly a revolutionary plan. The invitations had, therefore, to be restricted to those who as teachers had had at least something to do with vocational training. I had no idea that the co-workers in the cause of national education would receive the new idea with sympathy. The wider circle of educationists will undoubtedly be invited to consider the scheme when it comes before the public in a concrete and fuller form through Zakir Husain Committee. I would request those educationists who may have helpful suggestions to make to send them to Shri Aryanayakam, the convener and secretary of the committee, at Wardha.

"One of the speakers at the conference emphasized the fact that education of little boys and girls could be more effectively handled by women than men, and by the mothers rather than maidens. From another standpoint, too, they are in a better position than men to answer Prof. Shah's conscription scheme. Here is undoubtedly an opportunity for patriotic women with leisure to offer their services to a cause which ranks amongst the noblest of all causes. But if they come forward, they will have to go through a sound preliminary training. Needy women in search of a living will serve no useful purpose by thinking of joining the movement as a career. If they

approach the scheme, they should do so in a spirit of service and make it a life mission. They will fail and be severely disappointed if they approach it in a selfish spirit. If the cultured women of India will make common cause with the villagers, and that too through their children, they will produce a silent and grand revolution in the village life of India. Will they respond?"

His plans for reorganizing national education, popularly known as the Wardha Scheme, were accepted by the Zakir Husain Committee and the full report which appeared as a supplement to *Harijan*, on December 11, 1937, was a document of exceptional interest.

Three members of the New Education Fellowship, Dr. Zilliacus, Professor Bovet and Professor Davies, came on a brief visit to Gandhi. They expressed their deep appreciation of what he was doing in the cause of education. "I had been wishing all these years," said Dr. Zilliacus, "that leaders of opinion ought to turn their attention to education which alone can reconstruct society, and I cannot tell you how grateful I was when I found that you had turned your attention to education. We have studied your scheme and we must assure you of our heart-felt sympathy for its success."

"I am grateful," said Gandhi, "that so many educationists have blessed the scheme. There have been critics also; but when I launched my scheme I did not know that it would appeal to anyone beyond the circle of my co-workers. When I consider the masses of India and the masses situated as they are, I could not think of any other type of education. With them work must precede anything else, and the concern of an educationist is to make that work educative. Let every child feel that he creates something for use and also expands his mind and heart therethrough."

"I agree," said Dr. Zilliacus. "The great psychologist Dr. Adler, who could not express himself well in English, said: 'All that education should do is to put the child on the useful side.'"

In the course of a brief talk with another visitor, Gandhi explained the central idea of his scheme: "My idea is not merely to teach a particular profession or occupation to the children, but to develop the full man through teaching that occupation. He will not only learn weaving, for instance, but learn why he should weave in a particular fashion and not any other, why he should handle yarn in a particular fashion and no other, why he should himself know spinning and should insist on a particular count for a particular kind of

weaving. All these things the weaver boy does not learn at home. The spinning wheel is to him just what it was a thousand years ago. We make him learn the art of making the most efficient wheel and a loom, not so as to displace other labour but so as to make them more efficient than the existing models. Your suggestion for different schools for different classes, weavers, spinners, carpenters, and so on, would not answer my purpose. For, I want to bring about equalization of status. The working classes have all these centuries been isolated and relegated to a lower status. They have been Shudras, and this word has been interpreted to mean an inferior status. I want to allow no differentiation between the son of a weaver, of an agriculturist and of a schoolmaster."

"But should we not have different time-tables for different boys, I mean seasonal time-tables?"

"No, we need not have even different hours. The village is a composite whole. The vast majority of the rural population is agricultural. I need not conduct a separate type of school for the ten per cent of the non-agricultural population in India. I do not want to make everyone of the boys and girls in the villages of India spinners or weavers, but I want to make of them whole men through whatsoever occupation they will learn. The village school will be turned into an educative workshop in as economical and efficient a manner as possible."

Dr. John De Boer upheld the Wardha scheme of education. He said that the scheme had appealed to him most strongly because at the back of it was non-violence. But his only complaint was that non-violence figured so little in the syllabus. "The reason why it has appealed to you is quite all right," said Gandhi. "But the whole syllabus cannot centre round non-violence. It is enough to remember that it emerges from a non-violent brain. But it does not presuppose the acceptance of non-violence by those who accept it. Thus, for instance, all members of the committee do not accept non-violence as a creed. Just as a vegetarian need not necessarily be a believer in non-violence—he may be a vegetarian only for reasons of health—even so those who accept the scheme need not be all believers in non-violence."

"I know that some educationists will have nothing to do with the system because it is based on a non-violent philosophy of life," observed Dr. De Boer.

"I know it. But for that matter I know some leading men who would not accept khadi because it is based on my philosophy of life. But how can I help it? Non-violence is certainly in the heart of the scheme, and I can easily demonstrate it, but I know that there will be little enthusiasm for it when I do so. But those who accept the scheme accept the fact that in a land full of millions of hungry people you cannot teach their children by any other method, and that if you can set the thing going, the result will be a new economic order. That is quite enough for me, as it is enough for me that Congressmen accept non-violence as a method for obtaining independence, but not as a way of life. If the whole of India accepted non-violence as a creed and a way of life, we should be able to establish a republic immediately."

"There is one thing now which I do not understand," Dr. Boer said. "I am a socialist, and whilst as a believer in non-violence the scheme appeals to me most, I feel as a socialist that the scheme would cut India adrift from the world, whereas we have to integrate with the whole world, and socialism does it as nothing else does."

"I have no difficulty," said Gandhi. "We do not want to cut adrift from the whole world. We still have a free interchange with all the nations, but the present forced interchange has to go. We do not want to be exploited, neither do we want to exploit any other nation. Through the scheme we look forward to making all children producers, and so to change the face of the whole nation, for it will permeate the whole of our social being. But that does not mean that we cut adrift from the whole world. There will be nations that will want to interchange with others because they can't produce certain things. They will certainly depend on other nations for them, but the nations that will provide for them should not exploit them."

"But if you simplify your life to an extent that you need nothing from other countries, you will isolate yourselves from them; whereas I want you to be responsible for America also."

"It is by ceasing to exploit and to be exploited that we can be responsible for America. For, America will then follow our example and there will be no difficulty in a free interchange between us."

"But you want to simplify life and cut out industrialization."

"If I could produce all my country's wants by means of the labour of 30,000 people instead of thirty million, I should not mind it, provided that the thirty million are not rendered idle and unemployed.

I know that the socialists would introduce industrialization to the extent of reducing working hours to one or two in a day, but I do not want it."

"They would have leisure."

"Leisure to play hockey?"

"Not only for that but for creative handicrafts for instance."

"I am asking them to engage in creative handicrafts. But they will produce with their hands by working eight hours a day."

"You do not, of course, look forward to a state of society when every house will have a radio and everyone a car. That was President Hoover's formula. He wanted not one but two radios and two cars."

"If we had so many cars there would be very little room left for walking," said Gandhi.

"I agree. We have about 40,000 deaths by accidents every year and thrice as many cases of people being maimed."

"At any rate I am not going to live to see the day when all villages in India will have radios."

"Pandit Jawaharlal seems to think in terms of the economy of abundance."

"I know. But what is abundance? Not the capacity to destroy millions of tons of wheat as you do in America.

"Yes, that's the nemesis of capitalism. They do not destroy now, but they are being paid for not producing wheat. People indulged in the pastime of throwing eggs at one another, because the prices of the eggs had gone down."

"That is what we do not want. If by abundance you mean everyone having plenty to eat and drink and clothe himself with, enough to keep his mind trained and educated, I should be satisfied. But I should not like to pack more stuff in my belly than I can digest and more things than I can usefully use. But neither do I want poverty, penury, misery, dirt and dust in India."

Storm Signals

1937–1938

In all the Congress provinces the new dispensation opened with an attack on the methods of coercion employed under the old regime. Political prisoners were released, emergency powers repealed, bans on illegal associations and activities lifted, and the securities taken from dissident papers returned. It was in the sphere of civil liberties that the Congress governments clearly distinguished themselves from the non-Congress ones. The Congress ministers tried to reduce the burden of debt on the agricultural population and to reform education and local self-government, to give aid to the common people in various ways. In Madras, prohibition was introduced.

It was not easy for the Congress organization, with its past traditions and vast membership, numbering now three million, to adapt itself to new conditions. The office acceptance had brought a breath of fresh air and released mass energy. New problems arose and internal conflicts, which had so far been largely ideological, took new shape. No one, not even the opponents of office acceptance, wanted to create trouble for Congress ministers but there was a continuous attempt to bring pressure upon them by kisan demonstrations and strikes which embarrassed the Congress ministers greatly. In Bihar, the kisan movement came into conflict with the Congress organization. Elsewhere also, the high hopes that had been raised by the advent of the Congress ministries not being fulfilled, dissatisfaction arose. The strikes in 1937 accounted for a loss of nine million working days and involved 647,000 workers.

Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* dated October 23, 1937: "Civil liberty is not criminal liberty. When law and order are under popular control, the ministers in charge of the department cannot hold the portfolio for a day, if they act against the popular will. It is true that the assemblies are not sufficiently representative of the whole people. Nevertheless the suffrage is wide enough to make it representative

of the nation in matters of law and order. In seven provinces, the Congress rules. It seems to be assumed by some persons that in these provinces at least, individuals can say and do what they like. But so far as I know the Congress mind, it will not tolerate any such licence. Civil liberty means the fullest liberty to say and to do what one likes within the ordinary law of the land. The word 'ordinary' has been purposely used here. The Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, not to speak of the Special Powers Legislation, contain provisions which the foreign rulers have enacted for their own safety. These provisions can be easily identified, and must be ruled out of operation. The real test, however, is the interpretation by the Working Committee of the power of the ministers of law and order. Subject, therefore, to the general instructions laid down by the Working Committee for the guidance of Congress ministers, the statutory powers limited in the manner indicated by me, must be exercised by the ministers against those who, in the name of civil liberty, preach lawlessness in the popular sense of the term.

"It has been suggested that Congress ministers who are pledged to non-violence cannot resort to legal processes involving punishments. Such is not my view of the non-violence accepted by the Congress. I have personally not found a way out of punishments and punitive restrictions in all conceivable cases. No doubt, punishments have to be non-violent, if such an expression is permissible in this connection. Just as violence has its own technique, known by the military science, which has invented means of destruction, unheard of before, non-violence has also its own science and technique. Non-violence in politics is a new weapon in the process of evolution. Its vast possibilities are yet unexplored. The exploration can take place only if it is practised on a big scale and in various fields. Congress ministers, if they have faith in non-violence, will undertake the explorations. But whilst the ministers are doing this, or whether they do so or not, there is no doubt that they cannot ignore incitements to violence and manifestly violent speech, even though they may themselves run the risk of being styled violent. When they are not wanted, the public will only have to signify its disapproval through its representatives. In the absence of definite instructions from the Congress, it would be proper for the ministers to report, what they consider as violent behaviour of any member of the public, to their own provincial Congress committee, or to the Working Committee, and seek

instructions. If the superior authority does not approve of their recommendations, they may resign. They may not allow things to drift so far as to have to summon the aid of the military. In my opinion, it would amount to political bankruptcy, when any minister is obliged to fall back on the military, which does not belong to people, and which, in any scheme of non-violence, must be ruled out of count for the observance of internal peace.

"One interpretation I put upon the new India Act is that it is an unconscious challenge to the Congressmen to demonstrate the virtue of non-violence and the sincerity of their conviction about it. If the Congress can give such a demonstration, most of the safeguards fall into desuetude, and it can achieve its goal without violent struggle, and without civil disobedience. If the Congress has not impregnated the people with the non-violent spirit, it has to become a minority, and remain in opposition unless it will alter its creed."

At the end of October the A.-I.C.C. met in Calcutta. It was the first meeting held since the formation of Congress ministries and inevitably their work came up for discussion. The following resolution was adopted by the A.-I.C.C.: "The A.-I.C.C., while welcoming the steps taken by the Congress cabinets in the direction of the release of political prisoners and detenus, note that there are still several political prisoners in provinces where Congress cabinet exists, and that in many cases steps have not yet been taken to repeal the repressive laws, even those which authorize detention without trial. The A.-I.C.C. call for the complete implementing of the Congress election manifesto in this connection."

Long continued repression in Mysore was resented, and a resolution, which was not happily worded, was passed. "This meeting," the resolution stated, "sends its fraternal greetings to the people of Mysore and wishes them all success in their legitimate non-violent struggle and appeals to the people of Indian states and British India to give all support and encouragement to the people of Mysore in their struggle against the state for right of self-determination."

These resolutions, especially the Mysore one, were disapproved by many members of the Working Committee, and Gandhi, who was seriously ill at the time, was upset by them. He expressed himself at a meeting of the Working Committee in unusually strong language and condemned artificial combinations in the Congress. This could not go on, he said, and the organization must be one from top

to bottom. He said that he would have to withdraw completely unless a change was made in the Congress and this drift stopped. Commenting on the A.-I.C.C., he wrote:

"Congress ministers have a fourfold responsibility. As an individual, a minister is primarily responsible to his constituents. If he is satisfied that he no longer enjoys their confidence, or that he has changed the views for which he was elected, he resigns. Collectively the ministers are responsible to the majority of the legislators who, by a non-confidence vote or similar means, may any moment drive them out of the office. But a Congress minister owes his position and responsibility to his provincial Congress committee and the A.-I.C.C. So long as all these four bodies act in co-ordination, ministers have smooth sailing in the discharge of their duty.

"The recent meeting of the A.-I.C.C. showed, however, that some of its members were not at all in accord with the Congress ministries, specially that of C. Rajagopalachari, the Prime Minister of Madras. Healthy, well-informed, balanced criticism is the ozone of public life. A most democratic minister is likely to go wrong without ceaseless watch from the public. But the resolution moved in the A.-I.C.C. criticizing the Congress ministries and still more the speeches, were wide of the mark. The critics had not cared to study the facts. They had not before them C. Rajagopalachari's reply. They knew that he was most eager to come and answer his critics. But severe illness prevented him from coming. The critics owed it to their representative that they should postpone the consideration of the resolution. Let them study and take to heart what Jawaharlal Nehru has said in his elaborate statement on the matter. I am convinced that in their action the critics departed from truth and non-violence. If they had carried the A.-I.C.C. with them, the Madras ministers at least would have resigned, although they seemingly enjoy the full confidence of the majority of the legislators. Surely, that would not have been a desirable result.

"Much more offensive, in my opinion, was the Mysore resolution; and the pity of it is that it was carried with practically nobody to speak out for truth. I hold no brief for Mysore. There are many things I would like the maharaja to reform. But the Congress policy is to give even an opponent his due. In my opinion, the Mysore resolution was *ultra vires* of the resolution of non-interference. And this, so far as I am aware, has never been repealed. On merits, the

A.-I.C.C. was not out to deal with the states as a whole. It was dealing only with the policy of repression. The resolution did not set forth the correct state of affairs, and the speeches were full of passion and without regard to the facts of the case. The A.-I.C.C. should have appointed, if it was so minded, a committee even of one person to ascertain the facts before proceeding to pronounce judgement. The least it can do in such matters, if it has any regard for truth and non-violence, is first to let the Working Committee to pronounce its judgement on them and then, if necessary, review them in a judicial manner. I have purposely refrained in the case of either resolution from going into details to prove my submission. I am saving my limited energy and am leaving the matter also to the good sense of the members of the A.-I.C.C., which has since 1920 assumed a unique importance, and doubly so after the office acceptance resolution of the Congress."

Many other topics were discussed at the A.-I.C.C. The committee urged the Government of India to remove all restrictions on the entry into India of political exiles. The Congress emphatically protested against the reign of terror as well as the partition proposals relating to Palestine and assured the Arabs of the solidarity of the Indian people with them in their struggle for national freedom. By another resolution, Japan's aggression in China was condemned and Indian people were called upon to refrain from the use of Japanese goods as a mark of their sympathy with the people of China.

The Working Committee considered the report of Bahadurji and Gandhi on the Patel-Nariman dispute and gave their opinion that Nariman's conduct had been such as to prove him "unworthy of holding any position of trust and responsibility in the Congress organization". Another decision taken was with regard to "Bande Mataram". In certain legislatures, the proceedings began with the singing of "Bande Mataram" and some Muslims objected to it. The committee pointed out that the present usage of the song as part of India's national life was of infinitely greater importance than its setting in a historical novel before the national movement had taken shape. Taking all things into consideration, the committee recommended that "whenever and wherever 'Bande Mataram' is sung the first two stanzas should be sung, with perfect freedom to the organizers to sing any other song of unobjectionable character, in addition to, or in the place of, 'Bande Mataram' song."

Gandhi's stay in Calcutta had been unexpectedly prolonged. He was in a poor state of health, and the previous day's discussion with the Working Committee members, on November 1, brought him to the verge of a breakdown. Tagore himself just recovering from serious illness rushed to see Gandhi. Too weak to walk upstairs, he had to be carried in a chair to the prayer meeting where he could sit near Gandhi for a while, but he would not disturb him by speaking and left him with his prayers and blessings.

For a while, it was not possible to move Gandhi back to Wardha and he stayed in Calcutta as a guest of Subhas Bose. He got the rest he needed for the long conversations with Governor Anderson and Premier Huq over the release of political prisoners in the Andamans. Ever since Gandhi successfully helped in terminating the hunger-strike, he had been interesting himself in their release and that of the detenus suffering imprisonment and restrictions on liberty, such as, internments and externments. He would not have gone to Calcutta but for the question of relief to be found for these prisoners and the detenus, and at grave risk to his health he spent three weeks interviewing the authorities, the prisoners and the detenus. As a result of his efforts the Bengal Government announced the release of 1,100 prisoners, although 450 still remained in captivity and there were also many who had been deported to the Andaman Islands. In expressing his satisfaction, Gandhi stated:

"The Bengal ministry is not bound by the Congress election manifesto. It does not share the Congress ideology. Yet it has travelled along the Congress lines to a considerable extent. Even a political opponent is entitled to credit when it is due. In my opinion, the Bengal Cabinet has responded to the public opinion in a measure, though not to the extent I had expected. I am sure that full measure of relief will be forthcoming if the atmosphere of non-violence is not disturbed by the step taken by the Government. Even the Congress insists on observance of non-violence. Indeed, it is its political creed. I hope that the released detenus will so act as materially to help the creation and consolidation of the non-violent atmosphere on which Shri Subhas Bose has justly laid stress.

"I hope that the released detenus will be no party to any public demonstrations on their behalf and that the public too will exercise the necessary restraint. I would urge the released detenus quietly to undertake some public service. The great business houses will, I

doubt not, help those who may be in need of employment. Most of those whom I met in the jails of Calcutta told me that their sole object in desiring release was to serve the public cause in the manner indicated by the Congress. They, one and all, warned me against entering into any bargain with the Government for securing their discharge. They would give no undertaking to the Government. The assurance given by them to me should, they stated, be regarded as sufficient test of their bona fides. I told them that I would not be guilty of selling their honour or self-respect for the purchase of their liberty.

"The public will recall that at the very outset of my negotiations I had ascertained from the Andamans prisoners whether I could work on the assumption of their renunciation of violent methods for the attainment of independence. I could not see my way to ask for relief without ability to give such an assurance, provided, of course, that it represented the correct mentality of the prisoners.

"I was not able to finish my work in Bengal. It was not possible for me to do more for the time being. I am grateful to the Government of Bengal for the facilities they gave me to see prisoners and detenus as often as I liked and without the presence there of officials. My talks are not yet finished. The Hijli friends wanted to have two or three days with me instead of two hours only which I was able to give them, and that too when they saw from my face that I was ill able to bear the strain of animated discussion. They were most considerate to me. I knew that I was taking them at a disadvantage when they could not speak to me with the freedom they would, if I was not unwell. I hope, as soon as my health permits me, to go back to Bengal and to see every one of the unreleased detenus and the prisoners.

"The communique is silent over the question of the Andamans prisoners. I know that the Government draw a broad distinction between the convicted prisoners and persons detained without a trial. The distinction is right. There are undoubtedly difficulties in the way. But at this stage I can only say that I have every hope—if all goes well, and the public will continue to help me as they have done hitherto—to secure their discharge also.

"One statement in the communique is disturbing. It states, 'Its (the policy's) success must, however, depend on the co-operation of the public and leaders in maintaining an atmosphere in which subversive movements will find no encouragement.'

"If by 'subversive movements' they mean only violent activities, there is no difficulty and no difference of opinion. But if in the phrase they include non-violent activities, such as the Congress stands for, including even civil disobedience, the releases will become an impossibility. Throughout my conversations with the ministers I had made it plain that I could only help in maintaining non-violence. Non-violence is the only proper and honourable common ground between the Government and the people. Democracy must remain a dream in India without that bed-rock. I hope and believe that by 'subversive movements' Government mean no more than activities which are either themselves violent or which are intended to further violence."

In the middle of November Gandhi returned to Wardha. In spite of illness he continued to take keen interest in what was happening around and drew pointed attention to the gathering clouds. There was trouble in Ahmedabad and Sholapur and Congress ministers authorized violent repression. In *Harijan* dated November 20, under "Storm Signals", Gandhi questioned whether the Congress was fit to rule. "The Sholapur affair and the labour unrest in Cawnpore and Ahmedabad," he wrote, "show how uncertain is the Congress control over the forces of disorder. Tribes called criminal cannot be dealt with radically differently from the past practice without ascertaining how they will behave. One difference can certainly be made at once. They may not be treated as criminals to be dreaded and shunned but efforts should be made to brother them and bring them under the national influence. It is said that the red flag men, communists, have been at work among the men in the Sholapur settlement. Are they Congressmen? If they are, why are they not found by the side of the Congressmen who are ministers at the wish of the Congress? If they are not Congressmen, do they seek to destroy the Congress influence and prestige? If they are not Congressmen and do not seek to destroy the Congress prestige, why have the Congressmen been unable to reach these tribes and make them proof against the blandishments of those who would exploit their traditional violent tendencies, so called or real?

"Why are we living in Ahmedabad and Cawnpore in perpetual dread of lightning or unauthorized strikes? Is the Congress unable to influence organized labour in the right direction? We may not distrust Government notices issued in the provinces administered by

Congress ministers. It will not do to belittle their notices as we used to treat the irresponsible Government's notices. If we distrust Congress ministers or are dissatisfied with them, they can be dismissed without ceremony. But while they are permitted to remain in office, their notices and appeals should receive the full-hearted support of all Congressmen.

"On no other condition can the holding of offices by Congressmen be justified. If in spite of honest effort by Congressmen, forces of disorder cannot be brought under control without the assistance of the police and the military, in my opinion, acceptance by the Congress of the burden of office loses all force and meaning, and the sooner the ministers are withdrawn, the better it would be for the Congress and its struggle to achieve complete independence.

"My hope is that the outbreak in the Sholapur settlement and the labour unrest in Ahmedabad and Cawnpore are the symptoms of the exaggerated expectations of radical betterment of the condition of labour and even of the so-called criminal tribes. Then the Congress should have no difficulty in checking disorders. If, on the contrary, they are signs of weakness of the Congress control, the whole situation arising out of the acceptance of office by Congressmen requires reviewing.

"One thing is certain. Congress organization needs strengthening and purging. On the Congress register there should be not merely a few lakhs of men and women, but every adult male or female above the age of eighteen, no matter to what faith they belong. And these should be on the register in order to receive proper training or education in the practice of truth and non-violence in terms of the national struggle. I have always conceived the Congress to be the greatest school of political education for the whole nation. But the Congress is far off from the realization of the ideal. One hears of manipulations of Congress registers, and of bogus names being put in for the purpose of showing numbers. When the registers have been honestly prepared, there is no attempt to keep in close touch with the voters.

"The question naturally arises: do we really believe in truth and non-violence, in sustained work and discipline, and in the efficacy of the fourfold constructive programme? If we do, sufficient has been achieved to show, during the working of the Congress ministries for the past few months, that complete independence is much nearer

than when offices were accepted. If, however, we are not sure of our own chosen aims, we need not wonder if one fine morning we discover that we had committed a grave blunder in embarking upon office acceptance. My conscience as 'a' or 'the' prime mover in the direction of office acceptance, is quite clear. I advised it on the supposition that the Congressmen as a whole were sound not only on the goal but also on the truthful and non-violent means. If we lack that political faith in the means, office acceptance may prove to be a trap."

Gandhi's health continued to be much the same. In December his doctors determined at a short notice to move him to Juhu. He was reluctant to leave Segaon but submitted to his doctors' decrees. "I am lying low," he said, "and content to vegetate for the present."

In the first week of January 1938 the Working Committee presided over by Nehru met in Bombay. The chief ministers of the Congress provinces attended the meeting. An important resolution was passed by the committee:

"The Working Committee have considered a motion relating to the release of political prisoners, the repeal of repressive laws and other allied matters which was referred to them by the A.-I.C.C. at Calcutta. The committee, after full and careful consideration of the situation in the various provinces and the difficulties inherent in the present position, record their approval of the work done by the Congress ministries, and appreciate that further efforts are being made to enlarge the bounds of civil liberty and implement the Congress programme. The committee are confident that such efforts will be continued by the ministries and will have the full co-operation of all Congressmen.

"The committee are of opinion that in order to facilitate and to expedite progress in this direction, as well as to strengthen the Congress organization in the struggle for swaraj, it is necessary to adhere to the Congress policy of non-violence and to discourage all incitements to violence. The committee appeal to the Congress committees and to individual Congressmen to help to create an atmosphere of peaceful disciplined action in the country and to warn any erring Congressmen against any tendency which militates against our policy of non-violence. Where necessary, Congress committees should take disciplinary actions against the Congressmen who offend against the Congress policy.

"The Congress ministries must guide themselves by the principle of civil liberty and the democratic approach by means of persuasion rather than by coercive action. But, in spite of every desire to avoid it, coercive action may become necessary, and in such cases Congress ministries will inevitably have to undertake it. Such coercive action should only be undertaken where there has been violence or incitement to violence or communal strife."

Independence Day pledge was altered this year: "The Independence pledge drawn up in 1930 described in some detail the moral and material harm done to India by the British imperialism. It was thought that the recital of this was not necessary every year. The old pledge was issued on the eve of the civil disobedience movement. Portions of it were not suited to the present altered circumstances." The Working Committee decided to issue the following new pledge for Independence Day, January 26, 1938:

"We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has also based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence.

"We recognize that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. India has gained strength and self-reliance and marched a long way to swaraj following peaceful and legitimate methods, and it is by adhering to these methods that our country will attain independence.

"We pledge ourselves anew to the independence of India and solemnly resolve to carry on non-violently the struggle for freedom till Purna Swaraj is attained."

The Congress took to co-operation but did not abate its opposition to the implementing of that position of the act which related to the federation. In the Congress provinces a resolution opposing the introduction of the federation was passed in the legislatures. By another resolution in the councils, it resolved that "conferring of any titles of

honour or titular distinction in the province by His Majesty or the Governor-General be discontinued".

Gandhi was still not in normal health but could not keep himself inactive. After a full month's stay at Juhu, he returned to Segaon on January 8. His blood pressure was erratic and he could spare only one hour daily in the afternoon to talk to visitors, and even that told heavily on his health.

The question of political prisoners in Bengal and elsewhere and the hunger-strikes resorted to by them was a constant worry to him. The Congress Working Committee met at Wardha in the first week of February to take stock of the general situation. The premiers of the Congress provinces were present by special invitation. The committee considered the situation arising out of the hunger-strike of the political prisoners in several provinces and passed a resolution to that effect: "The committee trusts that with the strenuous and the unceasing efforts of Mahatma Gandhi and the vigilance of the public opinion, the question of release will be satisfactorily solved at an early date and hopes that all the detenus and political prisoners will co-operate to this end by exercising patience and self restraint and that the public will do likewise by maintaining an atmosphere of non-violence."

Olive Branch

1938

In the second week of February 1938, annual session of the Congress was held on the bank of the Tapti river at Haripura, Gujarat, under the presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose. Everything here was on a grandiose scale. The panoramic lay-out of about two and a half miles, the vast number of huts for the visitors and delegates, the huge kitchen and waterworks, the grand pandal and magnificent exhibition grounds, and the large herd of cows for milk supply to the numerous visitors, were of a piece with the enormous scale on which everything was planned. About 7,000 volunteers and 4,000 workers were in charge of the arrangements. On the first day, tickets worth Rs. 56,000 were sold for the Congress pandal. There were thousands of squatters mainly villagers who, thanks to the microphone facilities, listened to the speeches. About 250,000 persons saw the exhibition and the sales of khadi amounted to a lakh of rupees.

Set in simple yet beautiful surroundings, Vithal Nagar revealed the artists' skill. Nandalal Bose and Ramdas Gulati, an imaginative engineer, who had created a bamboo city at Faizpur, once more performed a great miracle. There were fifty-one gates named after the Congress leaders, structures of bamboo and wood, and on the top were mounted earthen bowls of various shapes and sizes turned upside down. The gate named after Gandhi was the most magnificent in Vithal Nagar, and the beauty of these structures was heightened by square panel pictures which adorned the sides and tops of these gates and some of the leaders' huts. Gandhi's hut with palm-leaf roofing and khadi ceiling, surrounded by a moat, was built in idyllic setting, away from the bustle, to give him rest and quiet. The rostrum was artistic, made of pieces of bamboo cleverly arranged. Even the dustbins, being cylindrical pieces of bamboo *tattas,* bore the mark of the artists' hands. On a white background was a blue lotus reflected in water, symbolic of cleanliness and purity.

The first speech that Gandhi made on February 10, after months of public silence, was on the occasion of opening of the All-India Village Industries and Khadi Exhibition. He commenced by making a touching reference to the death of Pandit Khare who had died in harness at Haripura, only four days earlier. He said: "When I sent the late Maganlal Gandhi to Pandit Vishnu Digambar, for giving to the newly established Satyagraha Ashram a good music teacher, the old pandit knew what man he had to recommend. Pandit Khare justified his choice and filled the position to which he was called as no one else could have done. His death is likely to leave an unfillable gap. Few people who have devoted themselves to art are known to have achieved a unique blending of devotion to art and pure and blameless life. We have somehow accustomed ourselves to the belief that art is independent of the purity of private life. I can say with all the experience at my command that nothing could be more untrue. As I am nearing the end of my earthly life, I can say that purity of life is the highest and truest art. The art of producing good music from a cultivated voice can be achieved by many, but the art of producing that music from the harmony of a pure life is achieved very rarely. Pandit Khare was one of those rare people who had achieved it in a full measure."

Referring to the exhibition Gandhi said: "When an exhibition of this kind was first opened at Lucknow, I said that our exhibitions should be schools of instruction. Since then we have been progressing successfully towards the ideal and the exhibition I have just now been through and am declaring open is such an annual training school. It is not, as exhibitions of old used to be, a place of entertainment. It is a place of instruction for the hundreds of thousands of those who will be visiting it during the week or two that it will be on. It provides to the poor man who visits it a kind of provision for the next year's journey. It arms him with knowledge of an occupation which can carry him and his family through for the next year by working at it for eight hours. It ensures the training in securing an honest livelihood to every one who will use his or her hands and feet, no matter how ignorant or illiterate he or she may be.

"I have spent an hour this morning at the exhibition. Please do not think for a moment that there should be nothing new in it for one who is the president of the All-India Spinners' Association and who is guiding the All-India Village Industries Association. Even if

you think so, I am not a simpleton as to entertain the belief. I would like to spend not one hour but hours there, learning something new every moment. But I must confess that I should not be able to earn my livelihood from an occupation that I might pick up there. At the present moment I am begging my livelihood, which perhaps is inevitable for one like me. But I am sure that it is possible for any able-bodied man or woman to pick up one of the many processes exhibited here as a means of honest livelihood."

At Lucknow, Gandhi had used a simile in which he likened the spinning wheel to the sun round which all the other handicrafts revolved. And at Haripura he completed the details of the simile. "I have often said that if seven lakhs of villages of India were to be kept alive, and if peace that is at the root of civilization is to be achieved, we have to make the spinning wheel the centre of all handicrafts. Thus my faith in the spinning wheel is growing every day and I see it more and more clearly that the sun of the wheel will alone illumine the planets of other handicrafts. But I go a step further and say that just as we go on discovering new stars and planets in the vast solar system, even so we should go on discovering fresh handicrafts every day. But for the sake of this thing we have to make the spinning wheel the really life-giving sun. I made the spinning wheel in every home a necessary condition for the inauguration of satyagraha in Bardoli in 1921, and though I knew that the condition was far from being satisfied, I yielded to the importunations of the late Vithalbhai and inaugurated the satyagraha, with what followed you know very well. Well, I would even today ask the people of Bardoli to fulfil that condition of one wheel in every home. That will help you to eke out your small income and make you self-sufficient."

At Haripura, the Congress had suddenly to face ministerial crisis in the United Provinces and Bihar, where the premiers insisted on their right to order the wholesale release of all political prisoners. The Governors with the support of the Viceroy objected and the two ministries resigned on February 15. The news of the crisis came at the moment when members of the Working Committee were assembled at Vithal Nagar. Gandhi issued the following statement:

"I have read and reread section 126 (5) of the Government of India Act. It authorizes interference when there is grave menace to peace and tranquillity in any part of India through any action proposed by ministers. Surely the discharge of a few prisoners, even though they

were convicted of crime involving violence, for what they no doubt erringly believed to be the country's cause, so far as I could see, could not endanger peace and tranquillity. The Governor-General's interference would come properly if there was disorder consequent upon such release.

"In the case which has brought about the interference I understand the Bihar Prime Minister had been assured by the prisoners that they had changed their mentality and that they wanted to live, if they were discharged, as peaceful citizens.

"The action of the Governor-General bewilders me and makes me suspect whether the proposal to discharge the prisoners in question was merely the last straw and that Congress ministers in general had fatigued the British authority. I hope that my suspicion is groundless, but, if it is so, I fail to understand the interference unless there are good grounds of which the public have no knowledge. How I wish it was possible for the Governor-General to retrace his step and avert a crisis whose consequences nobody can foretell."

Gandhi gave the following message to *Daily Herald*: "The fear that I had entertained about the unwarranted interference by the Governors or the Viceroy with the due course of provincial autonomy has been justified in an unexpected manner. I can now only hope that what I regard as a grievous error may be somehow or other rectified. I hope that there is nothing to warrant another fear that has possessed me, namely, that the British authority has been getting tired, perhaps also alarmed, over the headway the Congress and Congress ministers are making along constructive lines. And yet, it is difficult for me to realize that the Viceroy would allow a grave crisis to be created over what must be in his estimation a paltry matter... Prisoners convicted for crimes of violence in pursuit of a political motive have been discharged before now and during the period of office of the Congress ministries. I do not know that any menace grave or other has been thereby created in respect of peace or tranquillity in any single part of India. The Congress ministers throughout the seven provinces have given ample testimony of their readiness and ability to cope with the forces of disorder. The Congress stands more to lose than Government if during its regime in any province disorders take place. I understand that the ministers in the provinces concerned have previously to asking for discharge of the prisoners assured themselves of the change of mentality of the prisoners. Surely, it is they

who according to law are in the first instance responsible for law and order. The Governor and the whole weight of British might is always in reserve, if in spite of the efforts of the Congress ministers disorders take place, with its well-known efficiency in suppressing disorders when they actually take place. Surely, there was no warrant whatsoever for interference with the deliberate decision of the Congress ministers in the matter under discussion. I cannot help thinking that the ministers who have resigned, have taken, under instruction from the Working Committee, the only honourable course open to them."

Speaking at the exhibition on February 16, Gandhi said:

"The U.P. and the Bihar ministries are here having tendered their resignations. There is nothing very extraordinary about that. They accepted their offices in full knowledge of the fact that the constitution is a bauble. What has happened in Bihar and U.P. may happen tomorrow in Bombay and the day after in Madras. But I am going to tell you today why exactly the thing has happened. If I am a minister it is within my power to release prisoners, no matter whether they are three or thirty. What right has the Governor to interfere? I am a minister because I have the majority of votes, and so long as I hold the office, there is no one to question my authority to release the prisoners. But the Governors of the two provinces have interfered. Let me tell you why. *Pace* what the socialist friends may say, I hold that the Governors dared to interfere because we have not realized the implications of khadi.

"Khadi has been conceived as the foundation and the image of ahimsa. A real khadi-wearer will not utter an untruth. A real khadi-wearer will harbour no violence, no deceit, no impurity. To those who will say, 'If this is khadi, we will not wear it', I will say, 'You are welcome to do what you like, but then you must forget to win swaraj by means of truth and non-violence. Nor may I compel you to observe truth and non-violence, nor may I compel you to win swaraj after my method.'

"Seven and a half lakhs have gone into the making of Vithal Nagar. There are many things here I have liked, but it lacks the spirit of khadi. The Sardar and I are close to each other, we are as one, we work alike and think alike, but it may be that even the Sardar has not fully grasped the secret of khadi. Where there is the conscious endeavour to fulfil the spirit of khadi, there is no place for the expenditure of seven and a half lakhs. I said that we should



Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

Gandhi and Kasturbai at Segaon, January 1938

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

On the ashram precincts, Segaon, January 1938



Photograph: Kanu Gandhi

Consultation between Gandhi and Nehru, Segaon, February 1938



Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

From Segaon, February 1938

be able to hold a village session at the outside expense of Rs. 5,000. Before the Faizpur Congress, I told Deo that he would be found wanting in my estimate if he failed to manage it with Rs. 5,000. Well, the idea has still not left my mind. If we cannot do this, we are not true soldiers of swaraj, we have not become real villagers. Rural-mindedness and electrical illumination go ill together. Nor have motor-cars and motor lorries any place there. They took me to Faizpur and brought me to Haripura in a car. They would not allow me to foot it out. They would not even take me in a bullock cart. That was reserved for Subhas Babu. If they had brought me in a bullock cart it would have meant some loss of time. But how does that matter? We have all become princes, and I am told some pedestrians waylaid the cars and threatened satyagraha if they were not given cars. The seven lakhs would not have been spent here, if we were khadi-minded. Here there are petrol and oil engines and water-pipes and stoves and electricity, most of the modern city dwellers' amenities, including the tooth paste and the tooth-brush and scented hair-oils. The villager is or should be unspoilt by these things. His brush is the fresh *babul* stick and his powder is salt and charcoal. You wear khadi, but what about the other things that surround you and are out of keeping with khadi?

"Because we have not assimilated and lived the mantra of khadi, some socialist friends are impatient with us and say that Gandhi's days are gone and a new age is upon us. I do not mind this, in fact, I welcome plain-spokenness. If you think that what I say deserves to be rejected, do by all means reject it. Do what you do for the sake of India, not for my sake. I am but an image of clay, which is sure to be reduced to cinders. If you wear khadi for my sake, you will burn khadi on the day you burn my dead body. But if you have fully understood the message of khadi, if you have thoroughly assimilated it, khadi will long outlive me. Khadi is not a lifeless image to be worshipped externally. Proper worship is not image worship, it is the worship of God in the image. If we miss the spirit of khadi and make only a fetish of it, we are no better than gross idolaters.

"For twenty years I have preached the cult of khadi to my countrymen. I want to preach the same cult today when I am at death's door. Khadi is no longer the old tattered rag it looked like when it was born. It has all the health, beauty and vigour of youth, and I can, therefore, preach the cult of khadi with redoubled faith and

vigour. Something within me tells me that herein I am not wrong. In khadi lies swaraj, independence."

On February 19 Subhas Bose delivered his presidential address: "The British empire is a phenomenon in politics. As Lenin pointed out long ago, reaction in Great Britain is strengthened and fed by the enslavement of a number of nations. The British aristocracy and bourgeoisie exist primarily because there are colonies and overseas dependencies to exploit. The emancipation of the latter will undoubtedly strike at the very existence of the capitalist ruling classes in Great Britain and precipitate the establishment of a socialist regime in that country. It should, therefore, be clear that a socialist order in Britain is impossible of achievement without the liquidation of colonialism and that we who are now fighting for the political freedom of India and the other enslaved countries of the British Empire are incidentally fighting for the economic emancipation of the British people as well."

"The British Empire," he said, "at the present moment is suffering from strain at a number of points. Within the empire, on the extreme west there is Ireland and on the extreme east, India. In the middle lies Palestine and Iraq. Outside the empire, there is the pressure exerted by Italy in the Mediterranean, and Japan in the Far East, both of these countries being militant, aggressive and imperialist. Against this background of unrest stands Soviet Russia whose very existence strikes terror into the hearts of the ruling classes in every imperialist state. How long can the British empire withstand the cumulative effect of this pressure and strain?"

Referring to the Indian struggle, he said: "The acceptance of office in the provinces as an experimental measure should not lead us to think that our future activity is to be confined within the limits of strict constitutionalism. There is every possibility that a determined opposition to the forcible inauguration of federation may lead us into another big campaign of civil disobedience."

Expressing his views on national reconstruction, Bose observed: "Our principal problem will be how to eradicate poverty from our country. That will require a radical reform of our land system including the abolition of landlordism. Agricultural indebtedness will have to be liquidated. Agriculture will have to be put on a scientific basis. A comprehensive scheme of industrial development under the state-ownership and state control will be indispensable. A new

industrial system will have to be built up in the place of the old which has collapsed as a result of mass production abroad and alien rule at home. The planning commission will have to consider carefully and decide which of the home industries could be revived despite the competition of modern factories and in which sphere, should large-scale production be encouraged. However much we may dislike modern industrialism and condemn the evils which follow in its train, we cannot go back to the pre-industrial eras, even if we desire to do so. It is well, therefore, that we should reconcile ourselves to industrialism and devise means to minimize its evils and at the same time explore the possibilities of reviving cottage industries where there is a possibility of their surviving the inevitable competition of factories. In India, there will be plenty of room for cottage industries, especially in the case of industries including hand-spinning and weaving allied to agriculture."

On the question of foreign policy for India, he struck a new note: "I attach great importance to this work, because I believe that in the years to come, international developments will favour our struggle in India. But we must have a correct appreciation of the world situation at every stage and should know how to take advantage of it. In connection with our foreign policy, the first suggestion that I have to make is that we should not be influenced by international politics of any country or the form of its state. We shall find in every country, men and women who will sympathize with Indian freedom, no matter what their own political views may be. In this matter I should take a leaf out of Soviet diplomacy."

He concluded saying: "The Congress is the one supreme organ of mass struggle. It may have its right block and its left, but it is the common platform for all anti-imperialist organizations striving for Indian emancipation. Let us, therefore, rally the whole country under the banner of the Congress. I would appeal to the leftist group to pool all their strength and resources for democratizing the Congress and reorganizing it on the broadest anti-imperialist basis...

"I shall voice your feelings by saying that all India fervently hopes and prays that Mahatma Gandhi may be spared to our nation for many years to come. India cannot afford to lose him and certainly not at this hour. We need him to keep our struggle free from bitterness and hatred. We need him for the cause of Indian independence, for the cause of humanity."

In the course of a resolution passed at Haripura on ministerial crisis in U.P. and Bihar the following was stated:

"The experience of office by Congress ministers in the provinces has shown that at least in two provinces, the United Provinces and Bihar, there has, in fact, been interference in the day-to-day administration of provincial affairs. The Governors, when they invited Congress members to form ministries, knew that the Congress manifesto had mentioned the release of political prisoners as one of the major items of the Congress policy. In pursuance thereof the ministers began the release of political prisoners and they soon experienced delay, which was sometimes vexatious, before the Governors would endorse the orders of release. The way releases have been repeatedly delayed is evidence of exemplary patience of the ministers. In the opinion of the Congress, the release of prisoners is a matter coming essentially within the purview of day-to-day administration, which does not admit of protracted discussion with Governors. The function of the Governor is to guide and advise ministers, not to interfere with the free exercise of their judgement in the discharge of their day-to-day duty. It was only when the time came for the Working Committe to give an annual account to the Congress delegates and to the masses of people backing them, that the committee had to instruct ministers, who were themselves sure of their ground, to order release of political prisoners in their charge and to resign if their orders were countermanded. The Congress approves of and endorses the action taken by the ministers of the United Provinces and Bihar and congratulates them on it.

"In the opinion of the Congress, the interference of the Governor-General with the deliberate action of the respective prime ministers is not merely a violation of the assurance above referred to, but it is a misapplication of section 126(5) of the Government of India Act. There was no question of grave menace to peace and tranquillity involved. The prime ministers had, in both the cases satisfied themselves from assurances from the prisoners concerned and otherwise of their change of mentality and acceptance of the Congress policy of non-violence. It is the Governor-General's interference which has undoubtedly created a situation that may easily, in spite of the Congress effort to the contrary, become such a grave menace.

"The Congress has, during the short period that the Congressmen have held office, given sufficient evidence of their self-sacrifice,

administrative capacity and constructive ability in the matter of enacting legislation for the amelioration of economic and social evils. The Congress gladly admits that a measure of co-operation was extended by the Governors to the ministers. It has been the sincere effort on the part of the Congress to extract what is possible from the act for the public good and to strengthen the people in the pursuit of their goal of Complete Independence and the ending of the imperialistic exploitation of the masses of India.

"The Congress does not desire to precipitate a crisis which may involve non-violent non-co-operation and direct action, consistent with the Congress policy of truth and non-violence. The Congress is, therefore, at present reluctant to instruct the ministers in other provinces to send in their resignations by way of protest against the Governor-General's action, and invites His Excellency the Governor-General to reconsider his decision so that the Governors may act constitutionally and accept the advice of their ministers in the matter of the release of the political prisoners.

"The Congress regards the formation of irresponsible ministries as a way of disguising the naked rule of the sword. The formation of such ministries is calculated to rouse extreme bitterness and internal quarrels, and further deepen the resentment against the British Government. When the Congress approved of acceptance of office with great reluctance and considerable hesitation, it had no misgivings about its own estimate of the real nature of the Government of India Act. The latest action of the Governor-General justifies that estimate, and not only exposes the utter inadequacy of the act to bring real liberty to the people, but also shows the intention of the British Government to use and interpret it not for the expansion of liberty but for its restriction. Whatever, therefore, may be the ultimate result of the present crisis, the people of India should realize that there can be no true freedom for the country so long as this act is not ended and a new constitution framed by a constituent assembly, elected on the basis of adult franchise, takes its place. The aim of all Congressmen, whether in office or out of office, in legislatures or out of legislatures, can only be to reach that goal, even though it may mean, as it must mean, sacrifice of many a present advantage however beneficial and worthy it might be for the time being.

"The Congress has given during the past few months ample evidence of its desire to take severe notice of indiscipline and breach of

the code of non-violence that the Congress had laid down for itself. Nevertheless the Congress invites the attention of Congressmen to the fact that indiscipline in speech and action, calculated to promote or breed violence, retards the progress of the country towards its cherished goal.

"In pursuit of its programme of release of political prisoners, the Congress has not hesitated to sacrifice office and the opportunity of passing ameliorative measures. But the Congress wishes to make it clear that it strongly disapproves of hunger-strikes for release. They embarrass the Congress in pursuit of its policy of securing release of political prisoners. The Congress, therefore, urges those who are still continuing their hunger-strike in the Punjab to give up their strike, and assures them that whether in provinces where Congressmen hold ministerial offices or in other provinces, Congressmen will continue their efforts to secure the release of detenus and political prisoners by all legitimate and peaceful means."

In rejecting the new constitution and condemning the proposed federal scheme the Congress declared that a constitution for India, which could be accepted by the people, must be based on independence and could only be framed by the people themselves by means of a constituent assembly, without interference by foreign authority. The resolution further declared: "The Congress is not opposed to the idea of a federation; but a real federation must, even apart from the question of responsibility, consist of three units enjoying more or less the same measure of freedom and civil liberty, and representation by the democratic process of election. The Indian states participating in the federation should approximate to the provinces in the establishment of representative institutions, responsible government, civil liberties and method of election to the federal houses. Otherwise the federation as it is now contemplated, will, instead of building up Indian unity, encourage separate tendencies and involve the states in internal and external conflicts."

The resolution on the minority rights ran thus: "The Congress welcomes the growth of anti-imperialist feeling among Muslims and other minorities in India and the growing unity of all classes and communities in India in the struggle for India's independence which is essentially one and indivisible, and can only be carried on effectively on a united national basis . . . The Congress approves of and confirms the resolution of the Working Committee on the minority

rights passed in Calcutta on October 1937, and declares afresh that it regards it as its primary duty and fundamental policy to protect the religious, linguistic, cultural and other rights of the minorities in India so as to ensure for them, in any scheme of Government to which the Congress is a party, the widest scope for their development and their participation in the fullest measure in the political, economic and cultural life of the nation."

The resolution on the Indian states said: "In view of the fact that owing to the growth of public life and the demand for freedom in the Indian states, new problems are arising and new conflicts are taking place, the Congress lays down afresh its policy in regard to the states.

"The Congress stands for the same political, social and economic freedom in the states as in the rest of India and considers the states as integral parts of India which cannot be separated. The Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence, which is the objective of the Congress, is for the whole of India inclusive of the states, for the integrity and unity of India must be maintained in freedom as it has been maintained in subjection. The only kind of federation that can be acceptable to the Congress is one in which the states participate as free units, enjoying the same measure of democratic freedom as the rest of India. The Congress, therefore, stands for full responsible government and the guarantee of civil liberty in the states, and deplores the present backward conditions and utter lack of freedom and suppression of civil liberties in many of these states.

"The Congress considers it its right and privilege to work for the attainment of this objective in the states. But under existing circumstances, the Congress is not in a position to work effectively to this end within the states and numerous limitations and restrictions, imposed by the rulers or by British authority working through them, hamper its activities. The hope and assurance which its name and its great prestige raise in the minds of the people of the states find no immediate fulfilment, and disillusion results. It is not in consonance with the dignity of the Congress to have such local committees which cannot function effectively, or to tolerate any indignity to the national flag. The inability of the Congress to give protection or effective help, when hopes have been raised, produces helplessness in the people of the states and hinders the development of their movement for freedom.

"In view of the different conditions prevailing in the states and the rest of India, the general policy of the Congress is often unsuited to the states and may result in preventing or hampering the natural growth of a freedom movement in a state. Such movements are likely to develop rapidly and to have a broader basis, if they draw their strength from the people of the state, produce self-reliance in them, and are in tune with the conditions prevailing there, and do not rely on extraneous help and assistance, or on the prestige of the Congress name. The Congress welcomes such movements, but in the nature of things and under present conditions, the burden of carrying on the struggle for freedom must fall on the people of the states. The Congress will extend its goodwill and support to such struggles carried on in a peaceful and legitimate manner, but that organizational help will inevitably be, under existing conditions, moral support and sympathy. Individual Congressmen, however, will be free to render further assistance in their personal capacities. In this way the struggle can develop without committing the Congress organization, and thus unhindered by external considerations.

"The Congress, therefore, directs that, for the present, Congress committees in the states shall function under the direction and control of the Congress Working Committee and shall not engage in parliamentary activity, nor launch on direct action in the name and under the auspices of the Congress. Internal struggles of the people of the states must not be undertaken in the name of the Congress. For this purpose, independent organizations should be started and continued where they exist already within the states.

"The Congress also desires to assure the people of the states of its solidarity with them and of its active and vigilant interest in and sympathy with their movement for freedom. It trusts that the day of their deliverance is not far distant."

The resolution on the kisan sabhas said: "In view of certain difficulties that have arisen in regard to the kisan sabhas and other organizations in some parts of India, the Congress desires to clarify the position and state its attitude in regard to them. The Congress has already fully recognized the right of kisans to organize themselves in peasant unions. Nevertheless it must be remembered that the Congress itself is in the main a kisan organization and as its contacts with the masses have increased, vast numbers of kisans have joined it and influenced its policy. The Congress must, and has

Photograph: N. Kothari

Vithal Nagar, Haripura Congress, February 1938

Gandhi's hut at Haripura





From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi declaring open A.-I.V.I.A. exhibition at Haripura, February 10, 1938

On the exhibition grounds

Photograph : N. Raval

Gandhi inspecting the exhibits

Photograph : N. Kothari

At an exhibition stall





Photograph : N. Kothari

At the khadi stall

Gandhi and President Bose at the commencement of the Haripura Congress session, February 19, 1938



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

President Bose, Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru on the way to the open session of the Haripura Congress, February 1938

Gandhi's letter to Dr. Hardikar regarding Congress volunteers organization, dated Segaon, February 24, 1938

Courtesy : Dr. Hardikar

Letter concluded

in fact, stood for these kisan masses, championed their claims, and has worked for the independence of India which must be based on the freedom from exploitation of all our people. In order to achieve this independence and strengthen the kisans and realize their demands, it is essential that the Congress be strengthened and that the kisans should be invited to join it in ever larger numbers and organized to carry on their struggle under its banner. It is the duty of every Congressman to work for the spread of the Congress organization in every village in India and not to do anything which weakens this organization in any way.

"While recognizing the right of kisans to organize kisan sabhas, the Congress cannot associate itself with any activities which are incompatible with the basic principles of the Congress and will not countenance any activities of those Congressmen, who as members of the kisan sabhas, help in creating an atmosphere hostile to the Congress principles and policy. The Congress, therefore, calls upon provincial Congress committees to bear the above in mind and in pursuance of it take suitable action wherever called for."

The resolution on China stated: "The Congress has viewed with anxious concern the aggression of a brutal imperialism in China and horrors and frightfulness that have accompanied it. In the opinion of the Congress this imperialist invasion is fraught with the gravest consequences for the future of world peace and of freedom in Asia. The Congress sends its deepest sympathy to the people of China in their great ordeal and expresses its admiration for the heroic struggle they are conducting to maintain their freedom and integrity. It congratulates them on achieving national unity and co-ordination in the face of danger and assures them of the solidarity of the Indian people with them in the common task of combating imperialism and achieving freedom. And as a mark of India's sympathy with the Chinese people, the Congress calls upon the people of India to refrain from purchasing Japanese goods."

On national education, the following resolution was adopted:

"The Congress has emphasized the importance of national education ever since 1906, and during the non-co-operation period many national educational institutions were started under its auspices. The Congress attaches the utmost importance to a proper organization of mass education and holds that all national progress ultimately depends on the method, content and objective of education that is

provided for the people. The existing system of education in India is admitted to have failed. Its objectives have been anti-national and anti-social, its methods have been antiquated, and it has been confined to a small number of people and has left the vast majority of our people illiterate. It is essential, therefore, to build up national education on a new foundation and on a nation-wide scale. As the Congress is having new opportunities of service and of influencing and controlling state education, it is necessary to lay down the basic principles which should guide such education and take other necessary steps to give effect to them. The Congress is of opinion that for the primary and the secondary stages a basic education should be imparted in accordance with the following principles: (1) Free and compulsory education should be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale. (2) The medium of instruction must be the mother tongue. (3) Throughout this period, education should centre round some form of manual and productive work, and all other activities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child.

"Accordingly the Congress is of opinion that an All-India Education Board to deal with this basic part of education be established, and for this purpose requests and authorizes Dr. Zakir Husain and Shri E. Aryanayakam, to take immediate steps, under the advice and guidance of Gandhiji, to bring such a board into existence, in order to work out in a consolidated manner a programme of basic national education and to recommend it for acceptance to those who are in control of state or private education."

The Haripura Congress reduced differences to a minimum and actively promoted co-operation between different political schools of thought in the country. The important resolution on the ministerial crisis, couched in courteous and conciliatory language, was in effect an offer of the olive branch to the Government.

Crisis Averted

1938

In reply to the resolution of the Congress on the ministerial crisis, the Viceroy issued the following statement on February 22, 1938:

"The history of the difficulties which have arisen in the United Provinces and Bihar in connection with the release of prisoners, described as political prisoners, is well known. In both provinces discussions regarding the release of prisoners in this class have for some time past been proceeding between the ministers and the Governors; and the Governors have throughout made it clear that they were ready and willing to examine individual cases and would not stand in the way of their release unless circumstances were clearly such as to involve the responsibilities laid upon them by the act.

"The principle of individual examination was well established over many months in the provinces where the Congress is in power. It was equally established in other provinces and Mr. Gandhi himself had proceeded on this basis in his recent discussions with the Government of Bengal. It was thus no new thing.

"Discussions regarding the release after examination of individual cases were proceeding when, on February 14, a demand was tendered by the Premiers of Bihar and the United Provinces for the immediate release of all prisoners classed as political in these provinces.

"In the case of Bihar that demand was received by the Governor at 1 p.m. and called for action by the Chief Secretary by 4 p.m. the same day. In the case of the United Provinces the time-limit set for compliance was also brief. In the case of Bihar, the premier made it clear that as a matter of principle he could not agree to individual examination. In the case of the United Provinces, after much discussion the ministers made it clear that the policy of gradual and individual release would not satisfy them.

"The prisoners in question are, almost without exception, persons convicted of violence or of preparation for specific acts of violence

by the normal criminal courts. Their record is such that individual examination was called for, not merely for the reason I have given but in the interest of public safety and the examination was equally essential in the interests of the maintenance of the sanctions of the law and of the authority and position of the courts.

"In these circumstances, having regard to the responsibilities which under the constitution are placed upon the Governor-General, the Governors of the provinces, after consultation with their ministers, referred for my instructions the advice which their ministers had tendered.

"Having regard to the circumstances described above to the essential necessity of considering the reaction of the adjoining provinces of the release of these prisoners, and to the fact that acceptance of the principle that terrorist convicts should be indiscriminately released, without regard to individual considerations, would be highly dangerous and, in view of the past history of terrorism, could not fail to give an impetus to fresh terrorist organization in Bengal, careful consideration left me no choice but to conclude that the issues involved were such that it was incumbent on me to issue instructions to those Governors under the provisions of section 126 of the act.

"The section empowers the Governor-General to issue orders to the Governors as to the manner in which their executive authority is to be exercised for the purpose of preventing any grave menace to the peace and tranquillity of India or of any part thereof. To acquiesce in the immediate indiscriminate release of the prisoners, with records of violent crime would have been to strike a blow at the root of law and order in India, dangerously threaten peace and good government, and run a grave risk to peace and tranquillity, all the more so since this categorical demand took no account of the possible reactions of certain releases on the position elsewhere or of the reiterated readiness of Governors to examine individual cases.

"The Governors, on receipt of my instructions, informed their ministers that they could not accept their advice on this matter. The ministers thereupon tendered their resignation.

"The Governors concerned and I, so far as I am concerned, have done our utmost over the last seven months to work in harmonious co-operation with the Congress ministries in both these provinces and all possible help has been lent to them. And there had been no foundation over that period for any suggestion that it is the policy

or desire of the Governor-General or the Governors to impede or to interfere with the legitimate activities of these ministries or to take any step the necessity for which was not imposed upon them by the terms of the act. That is equally true today.

"I have made it clear that in issuing the instructions I did, I had no hesitation in feeling that a grave menace to the basis of law and order, and so to the peace and tranquillity of India, would have been involved in the acceptance by Governors of demands of such an order presented to them in such a manner.

"As regards the particular issue of the release of prisoners, so far as the Governors are concerned, there is no going back on the policy of a readiness to examine individual cases. The Governors remain ready to agree to release after examination, where no undue risk in their own province or in any other province is involved. There is no impropriety, whatever may be suggested to the contrary, in their requiring such individual examination or in their declining without it, to accept the advice of their ministers. The ministers are responsible for law and order. But they are so responsible under the act, subject to the responsibility of the Governors to ensure the peace and tranquillity of their own provinces and the Governors are bound to have in mind the corresponding responsibility that falls on the Governor-General for the peace and tranquillity of India or any part thereof. Neither the Governor nor the Governor-General will wish to see his responsibility attacked but, as I made clear in my message of last June, where that responsibility is in fact attacked, neither the Governor nor the Governor-General can shrink from discharging it.

"Finally, and this I wish particularly to emphasize, there is no foundation for the suggestion that the action which I have taken is dictated by a desire to undermine the position of the Congress ministers. The Governors and I myself are only too anxious to lend all the assistance that we properly can within the framework of the act to any ministry in power in a province. Neither the Governor nor the Governor-General has any desire to interfere or any intention of interfering with the legitimate policy of the Congress or any other Government. The action taken in the present case has been designed to safeguard the peace and tranquillity of India and incidentally to uphold the sanction of the law and the orderly functioning of the constitutional machine.

"That action leaves it open to the ministers in consultation with the Governors to pursue a policy of the release of prisoners and they need anticipate no difficulty now, any more, than in the past, in securing the friendly and ready co-operation of the Governor in the individual examination.

"I am glad that in no quarter is there manifest any disposition to extend the area of difficulty beyond the limits of the position which I have described and it is my sincere and earnest hope that it may shortly be possible to return to normality and in the two provinces most concerned, the ministers, in discussion with the Governors, may find themselves able to resume their interrupted labours."

The next day Gandhi came out with the following rejoinder:

"I have read the Governor-General's statement with the respect and attention it deserves. I had hoped that it could give some satisfaction, as was given at least to me and, if I may say so, to a large number of Congressmen, when he made a pronouncement upon the Congress demand for certain assurances as a condition precedent to the acceptance of ministerial responsibility by Congress members of the provincial legislatures. It reads like a special pleading unworthy of a personage possessing unheard-of powers.

"No one has questioned the propriety of examining the cases of the prisoners to be discharged; but what I have questioned, and the Congress most emphatically questions, is the propriety of such examination by provincial Governors in provinces said to be enjoying complete provincial autonomy. That duty and the right of examination belong solely to responsible ministers as I understand the Government of India Act and the convention in responsibly governed colonies. The Governors' duty and right are to advise their ministers on the question of broad policy and warn them of danger in their exercise of certain powers, but having done so to leave the ministers free to exercise their unfettered judgement. If such were not the case the responsibility would become a perfectly meaningless term, and the ministers responsible to their electors would have as their share nothing but odium and disgrace, if their responsibility had to be shared with Governors in the daily administration of affairs by law entrusted to them. It is hardly graceful for His Excellency to quote against poor ministers their non-exercise of their undoubted powers to prevent Governors from examining individual cases. The Congress resolution describes their forbearance as exemplary patience.

I would venture to add that probably it was also the inexperience of the ministers who were totally new to their task. I am afraid that unless this crucial question is decided in favour of the ministers, it will be difficult for them to shoulder the grave responsibility that the Congress has permitted them to take over.

"I am glad that His Excellency has drawn public attention to the method I adopted in Bengal. He might have noted also the difference between Bengal on the one hand and U.P. and Bihar on the other. In Bengal I was dealing with a Government which was not bound by the Congress manifesto in any shape or form. The ministers there rightly or wrongly would not listen to a wholesale discharge of the convicted prisoners. I was treading upon very delicate ground in pursuance of my promise to the prisoners. My motive was purely humanitarian, and the only weapon that I had at my disposal was an appeal to the human in the Bengal ministers. And I am glad to be able to testify that I was not speaking to hearts of stone. The situation in U.P. and Bihar is totally different. The ministers there are bound by the manifesto which gave them victory at the polls. They had not only examined the cases of all prisoners whose release they were seeking, but being fully aware of their responsibility for the due preservation of peace in their provinces, had personally secured assurances from the prisoners in question that they no longer believed in the cult of violence.

"One thing in His Excellency's statement gives me hope that the impending crisis might be prevented. He has still left the door open for negotiations between the Governors and the ministers. I recognize that the notices were sudden, because in the nature of things they had to be so. All the parties have now had ample time for considering the situation.

"In my opinion the crisis can be avoided if the Governors are left free to give assurance that their examination of the cases was not intended to be usurpation of the powers of the ministers, and that since they had armed themselves with assurances from the prisoners they were free to release them on their own responsibility. I hope that the Working Committee will leave the ministers free, if they are summoned by the Governors to judge for themselves whether they are satisfied by the assurances they may receive.

"One thing I must say in connection with the exercise by His Excellency of his powers under section 126 (5) in the light of his

argument justifying the use of sub-section 5 of section 126. I have read the whole of it. It is entitled 'Control of the Federation over Provinces in certain cases'. Unless the sub-sections have no connection with one another, they are to be read independently of one another. My reading is that in the present case the exercise of powers under sub-section 5 of section 126 is a misapplication. But here I am treading on dangerous ground. Let the lawyers decide the point. My purpose in making this long statement is to assist a peaceful solution of the crisis that has suddenly appeared."

By the end of February when the Premiers of U.P. and Bihar returned from Haripura to their provinces, the Governors called them and they arrived at agreed conclusions. In almost identical joint statements by the Governors and the premiers the following was said:

"The cases of certain prisoners classified as political have been individually examined, and the Governor will soon be issuing orders on the advice tendered to him by his ministers, to remit the unexpired portion of the sentence in each case and to order their release. The cases of remaining prisoners are being individually examined by the minister concerned, and appropriate order will be similarly passed thereon within a short time. We have discussed the mutual relation of the Governor and the ministers in particular, in the light of the statements made by the Governor-General and Mahatma Gandhi on the present situation and the recent development as well as the resolution of the Indian Congress held at Haripura. We recognize the desirability of establishing a healthy convention and working for the promotion of the good of the province. There is no reason to fear any usurpation of, or interference with the legitimate functions of the responsible ministers."

And thus ended the ministerial crisis in U.P. and Bihar with the establishment and vindication of certain vital principles. The responsibility for law and order, which seemed to have been for a moment usurped, was returned to the ministers and they resumed offices. The crisis left the Congress stronger than before.

Gandhi returned to Wardha with some improvement in his health and workers began to pour in for advice and discussion. The resolution on the states passed at Haripura failed to satisfy some workers. In explaining the import of the resolution he said:

"The states resolution is a call to the states people not to go to sleep but to start work in right earnest. The Congress is deeply con-

cerned about the welfare of the Indian states, as the Congress resolution on the federation should clearly show. We want the states people to carry on ceaseless work in the states, but not in the name of the Congress. The use of the name of the Congress may expose the Congress to insult. If insult could result in good to the states people, I would court it. But it is far from being so. The Congress cannot in the nature of things step into each and every Indian state and protect those who agitate there. It is better able to protect them by not allowing them to use its name. If the states people have begun to understand and respect the Congress it is a good thing, but then let them work with the moral support of the Congress but avoid the Congress name. Whenever the Congress can effectively help the states people, it would do so not by actively meddling with their affairs but by acting as an intermediary. Co-operation from within the states is an impossible proposition, and, therefore, I have been deliberately advising the states people to refrain from having Congress committees within the states. Some say: 'We would end the states.' Now this cry does neither these friends nor the Indian states any harm. But it would harm them, if they were actively interesting themselves in states affairs and trying to work there in the Congress name. The prestige of the Congress would suffer and not gain by the use of the Congress name. Mysore is a case in point. It had bona fide Congress organization but it could not prevent the Congress flag from being insulted."

"But," said the worker, "all these things have happened in British India too."

"They have and the Congress has always stood up to the insult. That is because in British India we can adopt civil disobedience for any good cause, but in the states it is impossible. The Congress committee will have always to be at the mercy of the states and would be in no better case than, for instance, a committee in Afghanistan, which again would entirely exist on the mercy of the Government of Afghanistan."

"When I came to India," said Gandhi, "I had an offer from three Indian states to settle and carry on my work from there. I had to decline the offer."

"But we do not ask for active help from the Congress. We want to organize under the aegis of the Congress. The onus of helping us would be upon the Congress, but we do not ask for the help."

"There it is," remarked Gandhi, "whether you ask for it or not, the onus would be upon the Congress, and it is not able to discharge it. Without being able to render any active support, the aegis of the Congress would be a superfluous affair. And a big organization like the Congress cannot allow itself to be stultified. This is all as plain as a pikestaff to me. I do not know how the states people fail to understand this. The best help that the Congress can render today is to destroy the delusion that it can actively help the Indian states. That will automatically mean that the states people must learn to rely on themselves for all internal reforms."

"I understand this very well. But look at the resolution as finally passed. The new rider that has been added is absurd. We are allowed to have committees in states but they will be allowed to do nothing. The position is anomalous."

"It is, I am afraid. It was a concession to the states people, but a useless concession in terms of my interpretation."

"What shall be our position? Shall we stop enrolling Congress members and begin to organize a separate national organization which will join the Congress under the present restrictions?"

"The real job is to build up your own organization. But you may continue to be members of the Congress, attend it and keep in touch with it. But your real work will lie in the states. The resolution is permissive. You need not set up a Congress committee in the states. But my advice is of no value. You must seek authoritative instructions from the Working Committee."

In the middle of March, Gandhi left for Calcutta to negotiate for further release of political prisoners—the task he had undertaken in November last. It proved very strenuous and on March 24, before leaving for Orissa, he made an appeal to workers and the public to be patient while negotiations were going on.

On March 26, *Harijan* appeared with a signed article by Gandhi, after four months of rest. Commenting on the Congress ministry's resort to force in the communal riots in Allahabad he wrote under "Our Failure":

"The communal riots in Allahabad, the headquarters of the Congress, and the necessity of summoning the assistance of the police and even the military show that the Congress has not yet become fit to substitute the British authority. It is best to face this naked truth however unpleasant it may be.

"The Congress claims to represent the whole of India, not merely those few who are on the Congress register. It should even represent those who are hostile to it and who will even crush it, if they could. Not until we make good that claim, shall we be in a position to displace the British Government and to function as an independent nation.

"This proposition holds good whether we seek to displace British rule by violent action or non-violent.

"Most probably by the time these lines appear in print, peace would have been established in Allahabad and the other parts. That, however, will not take us further in our examination of the fitness of the Congress as an organization, ready to displace British authority in its entirety.

"No Congressman will seriously doubt that the Congress is not at the present moment capable of delivering the goods, if it was called upon to do so. If it was capable, it would not wait for the call. But every Congressman believes that the Congress is fast becoming such a body. The brilliant success at Haripura will be cited as the most conclusive proof of the fact.

"The riots and certain other things I can mention should make us pause and ask ourselves whether the Congress is really growing from strength to strength. I must own that I have been guilty of laying that claim. Have I been overhasty in doing so?

"It is my conviction that the phenomenal growth of the Congress is due to its acceptance and enforcement, however imperfect, of the policy of non-violence. Time has arrived to consider the nature of Congress non-violence. Is it non-violence of the weak and the helpless or of the strong and the powerful? If it is the former, it will never take us to our goal and, if long practised, may even render us for ever unfit for self-government. The weak and helpless are non-violent in action, because they must be. But in reality, they harbour violence in their breasts and simply await opportunity for its display. It is necessary for Congressmen individually and collectively to examine the quality of their non-violence. If it does not come out of the real strength, it would be best and honest for the Congress to make such a declaration and make the necessary changes in its behaviour.

"By this time, after seventeen years' practice of non-violence, the Congress should be able to put forth a non-violent army of volunteers numbering not a few thousands but lakhs, who would be equal

to every occasion, where the police and the military are required. Thus, instead of one brave Pashupatinath Gupta who died in the attempt to secure peace, we should be able to produce hundreds. And a non-violent army acts unlike armed men, as well in times of peace as of disturbances. They would be constantly engaged in constructive activities that make riots impossible. Theirs will be the duty of seeking occasions for bringing the warring communities together, carrying on propaganda for peace, engaging in activities that would bring and keep them in touch with every single person, male and female, adult and child, in their parish or division. Such an army should be ready to cope with any emergency, and in order to still the frenzy of mobs should risk their lives in numbers, sufficient for the purpose. A few hundred, may be a few thousand, such spotless deaths will once for all put an end to the riots. Surely a few hundred young men and women, giving themselves deliberately to mob fury, will be any day a cheap and braver method of dealing with such madness than the display and use of the police and the military.

"It has been suggested that when we have our independence, riots and the like will not occur. This seems to me to be an empty hope, if in the course of the struggle for freedom we do not understand and use the technique of non-violent action in every conceivable circumstance. To the extent that the Congress ministers have been obliged to make use of the police and military, to that extent, in my opinion, we must admit our failure. That the ministers could not have done otherwise is unfortunately only too true. I should like every Congressman, I should like the Working Committee, to ask themselves why we have failed, if they think with me that we have."

There was biting criticism against his article—that it betrayed hysteria, it was written without sufficient data and that he was expecting the impossible from human nature. "The remedies are not beyond our ability," Gandhi replied, "if we have a living conviction about non-violence and its nature." He suggested these remedies:

"(1) We must discover a solution for the Hindu-Muslim tension. I use that expression deliberately instead of 'communal'—for if we find this, the other will follow as a matter of course. (2) There must be a purging of Congress registers so as to make them proof against bogus voters. From all accounts I receive, our registers contain too many bogus names to be called at all accurate. (3) Congressmen must not be afraid to find themselves in a minority. (4) Without

delay, every provincial Congress committee should raise a proper corps of volunteers pledged to non-violence in thought, word and deed. And there should be a manual of instructions as to training, etc., prepared for universal use.

"There is nothing heroic or impracticable in these suggestions. But they are impracticable, if those who lead have no living faith in non-violence. If they have not, the sooner non-violence is removed from the Congress vocabulary, the better it is for the Congress and the nation. The alternative is surely not unadulterated violence. The Congress is the only political organization in the world which has, at my instance, adopted unadulterated non-violence for the attainment of swaraj. It is its only sanction. I dare to say that if its quality is not what it should be, it will do great harm to the nation. In the last heat we may be found to be cowards instead of brave men and women. And there is no disgrace greater than cowardice for fighters for freedom. Surely there is nothing to be ashamed of in retracing our steps. If we feel that we shall not be able to displace the British power without a violent struggle, the Congress must say so to the nation and prepare accordingly. We must do what is being done all the world over—'forbear when we can, hit when we must.' If that is to be our creed or policy, we have lost precious seventeen years. It is never too late to learn and mend. Seventeen years in the life of a nation is nothing. It will go hard with Congressmen, if having received the warning they do not make the choice."

At the end of March, with tired body and mind, he reached Orissa for the annual meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh held at Delang. Gopabandhu Chaudhari, a tireless worker, who had for the last ten months laboured at making up the countryside self-sufficient, had the privilege of announcing that all the foodstuffs, oil, ghee and the vegetables had been procured from the villages within a radius of ten miles from Delang. The unique feature of this year's exhibition was that the workers had confined themselves only to arts and crafts of Orissa. Little courts were devoted to bee-keeping, wood work, horn work, bamboo leaf and cocoanut leaf work, brass and bellmetal work, shell work, pottery and pith work, which expressed Orissa art at its best. There were, of course, the handmade paper court, tannery court and khadi self-sufficiency court, exhibiting the work of the families which had pledged themselves to using nothing but cloth made by the members of the family. Thanks to the agricultural

department of Government, there was an agricultural section showing methods of keeping cows, silage, and sugar-making. The special feature was the court exhibiting crafts indigenous to Orissa, which had been recently revived. The entrance fee was a nominal charge of two pice and on the first day ten thousand tickets were sold.

In the opening speech, Gandhi said: "Orissa is the land of my love in India. Ever since I landed in India, I began to hear of Orissa's poverty and famine. Thakkar Bapa came in connection with it and organized famine relief, and I also realized that if I could serve Orissa somewhat, I would be so doing serve India. Later, Orissa became for me a place of pilgrimage—not because of the temple of 'the Lord of the World' was there—for it was not open to me, as it was not open to the Harijans—but because I thought of a novel way of touring the country for the sacred mission of the abolition of untouchability. I had heard that the so-called sanatanists were enraged at my mission and would try to frustrate it with violence. If they were really so minded, I said to myself, I should make their work easy by discarding the railway train and motor-car and trekking through the country. Pilgrims don't go on a pilgrimage in cars and trains. They walk to the sacred place, with the name of God on their lips, forgetful of the fitful fever of the world, and mindful only of offering one's homage to the Lord—the homage of the service. And if there was trouble in Puri because of the anger of the sanatanists, we would not flee from the wrath. We must face it. I could not do all this in a car or a railway train, and so I decided to perform the rest of the Harijan pilgrimage on foot. The temple of Jagannath, the Lord of the World, has the reputation of being the most famous in India, for there all human distinctions are supposed to vanish, and Brahmin and pariah brush shoulders with one another vying for the *darshan* of the Lord, and even eat His *prasad* out of one another's hands. But evidently it has outlived that reputation and the description has become a fiction, for Harijans would not be suffered to enter the great temple. I said to myself that so long as these distinctions endured before the very eyes of the Lord of the world, that Lord was not my Lord, that He was the Lord of those who exploited His name and kept Harijans out, but certainly not the Lord of the World. My ambition of the restoring of its old reputation to the temple is yet unfulfilled, and you have to help me in fulfilling it."

"The people of Orissa," he said, "have the doubtful reputation of opium addicts, even learned men not being free from the vice, as I found ten years ago. They are also indolent and lethargic. I know you will not mind my using this language, for you know the spirit in which it is being used. Orissa is the land of poverty because of its opium, indolence and bigotry. The exhibition gives me the hope that Orissa can rid itself of all these evils and be once again a land of happiness and plenty. The exhibition is bound to be a revelation to the villagers attending it of the great capacities and potentialities of the province. The workers with the co-operation of the Government have been able to bring into being an exhibition which is well worth a close study by man and woman, young and old.

"Man differs from the beast in several ways. As Madhusudan Das said, one of the distinctions is the differing anatomy of both. Man has feet and hands with fingers that he can use intelligently and artistically. If man depended wholly and solely on agriculture, he would not be using fingers that God has specially endowed him with. Mere agriculture cannot support us, unless it is supplemented by the work of the hands and fingers. We see in the exhibition what man's hands and fingers can produce and how they can supplement the income of the land. I would, therefore, ask each and all of you to go to the exhibition over and over again, pick up one handicraft and help in casting off the poverty of the land."

Addressing the Gandhi Seva Sangh on March 25, he said:

"Kishorlalbhai, our president, who is more ill than I, has prepared a long, well-thought-out address. He has dealt at great length with our mutual misunderstandings, bickerings, our refusal to understand and bear with one another and so on, and asked whether our faith is anything worth, if it does not reflect itself more and more in our daily lives. Do we feel that we are marching further forward every day towards our goal? Do we feel that we are today more non-violent than we were when we met a year ago? Have there been fewer occasions when we gave way to irritation and to anger? Such questions we have to ask ourselves again and again. For, the way of non-violence and truth is sharp as the razor's edge. Its practice is more than our daily food. Rightly taken, food sustains the body, and rightly practised non-violence sustains the soul. The body food we can only take in measured quantities and at the stated intervals; non-violence, which is the spiritual food, we have to take in

continually. There is no such thing as satiation. I have to be conscious every moment that I am pursuing the goal and have to examine myself in terms of that goal.

"The first step in non-violence is that we cultivate in our daily life, as between ourselves, truthfulness, humility, tolerance, loving kindness. Honesty, they say in English, is the best policy. But in the terms of non-violence, it is not mere policy. Policies may and do change. Non-violence is an unchangeable creed. It has to be pursued even in face of violence raging around. Non-violence with a non-violent man is no merit. In fact, it becomes difficult to say whether it is non-violence at all. But when it is pitted against violence, then one realizes the difference between the two. This we cannot do, unless we are ever wakeful, ever vigilant, ever striving.

"The riots in U.P. affected me very deeply. I discussed them with Maulana Azad and the Bose brothers in terms of non-violence. I felt that we were getting not nearer towards our goal but farther away from it. Haripura gave me reason to hope that we were growing in strength and in spite of our shortcomings we should be able to see swaraj in my lifetime. I had thought that we should in the course of the year acquire that strength. But the riots in Allahabad and elsewhere came as a rude shock. We were to our shame compelled to seek the aid of the police and the military.

"Supposing the Viceroy were to invite the President of the Congress to meet him and to state the Congress terms, do you think he would have the strength to say, 'The Congress is capable of taking charge of the administration, the British may go?' Do you think we could tell him that we should be able to do without the police and military, that we should be able to come to terms with the princes, the zamindars and with the Musalmans? I am afraid we could not honestly say that we should easily be able to come to terms with these. And yet if we had real non-violence in us, we should be able to say and do these things.

"I, therefore, ask you and myself whether our non-violence is of the weak instead of the strong, as it should be. That it can work to a certain extent in the hands of the weak is true. It has so worked with us. But when it becomes a cloak for our weakness, it emasculates us. Far better than emasculation would be the bravery of those who use physical force. Far better than cowardice would be meeting one's death fighting. We were perhaps all originally brutes,

and I am prepared to believe that we have become men by a slow process of evolution from the brute. We were thus born with brute strength, but we were born men in order to realize God who dwells in us. That indeed is the privilege of man, and it distinguishes him from the brute creation. But to realize God is to see Him in all that lives, that is, to realize our oneness with all creation. And this is not possible unless we voluntarily shun physical force and develop conscious non-violence that is latent in every one of us. This can only come out of strength. Have we the non-violence of the strong? It is open to us to discard it as an impossible ideal and choose instead the method of violence. But the choice has to be made.

"And if it is a weapon of the strong, then there are some inescapable conclusions. We should be able to deal with riots and stop the increasing tension between Hindus and Musalmans. What, you will ask, we as votaries of non-violence should have done to quell these riots? Well, it was primarily the work of the Congress committee to quell the riots. We should have thousands of volunteers ready to serve in a crisis of this kind. In 1921 we drew up a pledge for volunteers, wherein it was provided that a volunteer should be non-violent in thought, word and deed. Hakim Ajmal Khan, who was then president, had the same pledge accepted by the Khilafat volunteers. It was not without difficulty that the pledge was accepted by the Khilafat volunteers. It was not without difficulty that the pledge was accepted by the Khilafat conference. For a volunteer to be non-violent in word and deed was all right, some of the maulanas said. But to expect them to be non-violent in thought was a tall order. I was seeking, they said, to be master of their minds. I said, 'No. The mastery is to be of ahimsa, not of any single individual.' Ultimately they accepted the pledge. But, in spite of our having accepted the pledge seventeen years ago, we have not developed the irresistible strength that such acceptance of ahimsa means. The reason is that we have not troubled, we have not laboured, to organize such a non-violent volunteer army. If we cannot do so, if we cannot carry out the pledge, it would be well to reconsider our position. The tragedy is that the pledge is still in existence, but it exists on paper. If we had on a sufficient scale such a non-violent army as the pledge contemplates, we should not have had these riots; and if there had been, they would have quelled the riots, or immolated themselves in the attempt. We have heard of only one who met his death. I

admire his self-immolation. But my breast would have swelled with joy, if there had been several Guptas.

"Do you think this an empty dream? Do you really think we cannot quell the riots even with such a non-violent army? If you think so, if that is the conclusion that you arrived at after calm and dispassionate thinking, you must also conclude that swaraj cannot be attained by means of non-violence."

During his stay at Delang an incident occurred that shocked him intensely. He was almost prostrate with grief over the carelessness of his wife and Mahadev Desai's wife, who had entered the Puri temple, which was not open to the Harijans. On Monday evening, March 28, when they returned, Gandhi came to know about it. Gandhi had a sleepless night and he called Mahadev with his wife, Durgabehn, and Kasturbai to account. Durgabehn did not know that the Puri temple was not open to the Harijans. On the first day at the exhibition Gandhi had made it clear that the temple of the Lord was not open to Harijans and so long as it remained so, the Lord was not the Lord of the World, but the Lord of those who fed and feasted under His shelter. No amount of explanation from Mahadev and the culprits could satisfy him. He held that Mahadev should have explained to them the history of the movement, and if his wife did not listen, Gandhi's assistance should have been sought, and if then too she insisted on going, she would have been free to go.

Gandhi gave a talk to Kasturbai who humbly confessed her error and apologized. He did not blame her. "I neglected her education, and I must be held responsible for her mistake, not she." Then he took Mahadev to task for neglecting Durgabehn's education: "You have taken interest in Narayan, so that he knows much more than an average boy at his age. Should you not have taken the same interest in Durga's education? What is the use of your writing articles in *Harijan* on the subject of untouchability and opening of temples to Harijans, when you do not carry the message to your own home? Ba is too old to learn, but not Durga."

Gandhi held that Mahadev had not been watchful enough and had thus been unjust to him and the cause. And so he thus spoke to the members of the sangh:

"I am glad that Mahadev has told you something about what has happened, and now that he has said something I feel like saying out all that it is in me. The various items of constructive activity that

you are doing are only outward expressions of truth and ahimsa. They only reveal how far they can carry you on the road of ahimsa and truth, and ultimately to freedom. The removal of untouchability is one of the highest expressions of ahimsa. It is my daily prayer, as it should be the prayer of you all, that if untouchability does not perish, it were far better that Hinduism perished. This prayer found its most poignant expression during my Harijan tour of which the principal objective was the opening of the temples to the Harijans. I declared day in and day out that whoever believed in the removal of untouchability should shun temples which were not open to Harijans. Now, how could I bear the thought of my wife or my daughters having gone to such temples? I would plead with them, would go on bended knees to dissuade them from going to these temples, and might have to deny myself personal ties with them, if my entreaties failed. I have tried to live up to this principle all these years, and I felt humbled and humiliated when I knew that my wife and the two ashram inmates, whom I regard as my daughters, had gone into the Puri temple. The agony was enough to precipitate a collapse. The machine recorded an alarmingly high blood pressure, but I knew better than the machine. I was in a worse condition than the machine could show. The Gita teaches us the lesson of detachment, but that detachment does not mean indifference to shocks of this kind—failure in duty on the part of one's dearest ones. The three who went were the least to blame. They went in ignorance. But I was to blame, and Mahadev was more to blame in that he did not tell them what their *dharma* was and how any breach would shake me. He ought to have thought of its social repurcussions. They were ignorant I know, but we are responsible for their ignorance, and it is the reverse of ahimsa not to disturb their ignorance. I sent them to Puri not to go into the temple, but to stand just where Harijans were allowed to go and refuse in protest to go beyond that limit. That would have been the right kind of propaganda, and they would that way have done Harijan service. To do scavenging work or to eat with Harijans or feed them is not enough, if we do not deny ourselves the going to temples and the like, so long as our kith and kin, the Harijans, are denied their use.

"There is another aspect of the case. Sanatanists believe that untouchability is part of Hinduism, and so do the Muslims and the Christians who think that Hinduism is nothing if not 'don't-touchism'.

You cannot finally solve the Hindu-Muslim problem until you have removed the stain of untouchability by non-violent means. Then the Muslims will cease to regard us as unbelievers.

"Then there are the Harijans themselves. How are we to carry conviction to them that we are with them through thick and thin, and that we are completely identifying ourselves with them, unless we can carry our families—our wives, our children, brothers, sisters, and our relatives—with us in our programme of the removal of untouchability?"

The thought of his having been the cause of Gandhi's agony tormented Mahadev. "If I were guilty of a grievous error of judgement," he thought to himself, "how could I continue to serve him? How could I correctly represent and serve the Harijan cause? What right had I to be his door-keeper?" Mahadev had the "hell of a night", and in sheer desperation he wrote to Gandhi a note imploring him to put him away. This exasperated Gandhi all the more. He would prefer death, Gandhi said, at the hands of one who loved, to life at the hands of one who did not love him. Instead of realizing his folly and repairing it by going to Puri with a band of satyagrahi pilgrims, Mahadev had gone into hysterics over a well-meant rebuke. Instead of serving his wife Durgabehn, Gandhi said, Mahadev had in his blind love of her encouraged her superstition.

"All this was too stunning for words," observed Mahadev. "I felt that he who has performed several spiritual operations using the chloroform of love, had performed this one without that chloroform. In resentment, I cried: 'To live with the saints in heaven is a bliss and a glory, but to live with a saint on earth is a different thing.' "

In Slough Of Despond

1938

On April 1, 1938 Gandhi proceeded to Calcutta to attend the Congress Working Committee meeting. One of the resolutions adopted by the committee was on the subject of discrimination against commercial enterprises in India. Gandhi's views expressed from time to time were embodied in the resolution:

"The Working Committee view with grave concern the rapid increase in the number of companies owned and managed by foreign nationals and describing themselves with designation such as 'India Ltd.' or with similar words in the hope, or with the object, of being regarded as genuine Indian concerns. The establishment of these companies has the effect of robbing India of such advantages or benefits as are expected from the policy of discriminating protection which has been pursued by the Government of India for the development and growth of Indian industries.

"The Congress has always opposed the new constitution, not only because it is a negation of political freedom, but also because of the inclusion in the Constitution Act of provisions described as the safeguards against discrimination. The Working Committee are of the opinion that these provisions are not in the interests of India, but are intended and calculated to preserve to foreign nationals, and particularly British capitalists, the exploitation of the natural wealth and resources of this country. The Working Committee maintain that India has the right to discriminate, if that word must be used, against non-national interests, whenever and wherever the interests of India demand or require it.

"The Working Committee have no objection to the use of foreign capital or to the employment of foreign talent when such are not available in India or when India needs them, but on condition that such capital and such talent are under the control, direction and management of Indians and are used in the interests of India.

"The Working Committee are further of opinion and declare that no concern can or shall be regarded as swadeshi unless its control, direction and management are in the Indian hands. The Working Committee would prefer to delay the further development of Indian industries if it can only result in the dumping of foreign industrial concerns who would exploit the natural resources of India. The Working Committee, therefore, hold that the development of India's resources should be achieved by building up industries under the control, direction and management of Indians, which is essential for India's economic independence."

At an informal meeting of Congressmen, Gandhi spoke on the zamindari problem. "The difference between your view and mine," he said, "is based on the question whether the zamindari system is to be mended or ended. I say it should be mended, and if it cannot be mended, it would end itself. You say that it is incapable of being mended."

The question that puzzled many workers was: "The zamindars and *mahajans* are the instruments of bureaucracy. They have always sided with it and are obstacle to our progress and our freedom. Why should not the obstacle be removed?" Gandhi replied:

"They are indeed part and parcel of the bureaucracy. But they are its helpless tools. Must they for ever remain so? We may do nothing to put them away from us. If they change their mentality, their services can be utilized for the nation. If they will not change, they will die a natural death. If we have non-violence in us, we will not frighten them. We have to be doubly careful when the Congress has power."

Question: But can't we say that the system of zamindari is an anachronism and should go, by non-violent means of course?

Answer: Of course, we can. The question is must we? Why can't we say to zamindars, "These are the evils which we ask you to remove yourselves." I admit that this presumes trust in human nature.

Question: Would you say that the Permanent Settlement should remain?

Answer: No, it has to go. The way to make the kisans happy and prosperous is to educate them to know the reason of their present condition and how to mend it. We may show them the non-violent way or the violent. The latter may look tempting, but it is the way to perdition in the long run.

Question: But don't you agree that the land belongs to him who tills it?

Answer: I do. But that need not mean that the zamindar should be wiped out. The man who supplies brains and metal is as much a tiller as the one who labours with his hands. What we aim at, or should, is to remove the present terrible inequality between them.

Question: But the mending process may be very long.

Answer: Seemingly the longest process is often the shortest.

Question: But why not parcel out the land among the tillers?

Answer: That is a hasty thought. The land is in their hands today. But they know neither their rights nor how to exercise them. Supposing they were told neither to move out of the land nor to pay the dues to zamindars, do you think their misery would be over? Surely much will still remain to be done. I suggest that that should be undertaken now and the rest will follow as day follows night.

That led up to the question of the kisan sabhas, their relations with the Congress, their scope and their function. "My opinion," said Gandhi, "is clear-cut, having worked among the kisans and the labour all my life. There is nothing constitutionally wrong in the Congress allowing the kisan sabhas to work independently nor in allowing the office-bearers of the kisan sabhas to be office-bearers of the Congress, for they will come in the usual way. But my study of separate kisan organizations has led me definitely to the conclusion that they are not working for the interests of the kisans but are organized only with a view to capturing the Congress organization. They can do even this by leading the kisans along the right channels, but I am afraid they are misleading them. If the kisans and their leaders will capture the Congress by doing nothing but authorized Congress work, then there is no harm. But if they do so by making false registers, storming meetings and so on, it would be something like fascism.

"But the main question is whether you want the kisan sabhas to strengthen the Congress or weaken it, to use the kisan organization to capture the Congress or to serve the kisans, whether the sabha is to be a rival organization, working apparently in the name of the Congress, or one carrying out the Congress programme and policy. If it is really a rival organization and Congress organization only in name, its strength and energy will be utilized in resisting the Congress, and those of the Congress will be utilized in resisting the kisan

sabha, with the result that the poor kisans will be ground between the two millstones."

Gandhi's main engagement in Calcutta was in connection with the negotiations with the Bengal Government for the release of the political prisoners. From the very first day of his arrival the talks were resumed. There was a rumour that Gandhi was trying to get assurances by the prisoners and the detenus as a price of freedom. "As a civil resister," he said at the outset, "I would not be guilty of inducing any political prisoner to give such assurances. I can add that during my talks with the prisoners at Alipore and Howrah and the Regulation III prisoners at Hijli, they made it absolutely clear to me that they would give no assurance to anyone for the purpose of purchasing their freedom. I wish for the sake of the cause that the newspapers will not anticipate events. Every unauthentic report adds to my difficulties which are already formidable."

The negotiations with the Government were arduous. "I am at the end of my resources," he told the prisoners, "and although I am ready to return to Bengal if the Government of Bengal wants me, very much, I am afraid, will depend on my health." When he visited the political prisoners in Alipore Jail some months back, they were fresh from the Andamans, and they were anxious to go on hunger-strike once more if they were not released, or rather if he declared that he had failed in his mission. What was to be the position now? How long were they to wait?

Gandhi answered: "There should be no hunger-strike on any account. Though there are circumstances conceivable in which a hunger-strike may be justified, hunger-strike in order to secure release or redress of the grievances is wrong. And if you resort to it whilst I am carrying on negotiations, you will clip my wings. But why think of hunger-strike when you have got me as a good substitute for a hunger-strike? My days are numbered. I am not likely to live long, may be I may live a year or little more; let me tell you that much of that time is going to be given in order to secure your release. I want to see you discharged before I die. That is the word I am giving to you, and I want you to give me your word that so long as I live to work for you, you will not go on hunger-strike. I cannot have peace or comfort, so long as I have not secured your discharge. You have to believe what I say. Man believes and lives. My function is not that of a lawyer but of a humanitarian and a

votary of non-violence. Non-violence will not spread so long as you prisoners are kept in prison, and that is why I have staked my life for the mission. No thought, therefore, of hunger-strike please."

The negotiations with the Government were kept strictly confidential. On April 13, Gandhi issued the following statement:

"I regret to inform the public that the negotiations that I have been conducting with the Government of Bengal through Sir Nazimuddin have not yet been concluded. Meanwhile, I must repeat that all agitation for the release of the detenus and prisoners should be suspended while negotiations continue. I must also state that it is not conducive to the success of the negotiations if public demonstrations are held in honour of those who may be discharged. In my opinion, it is more dignified for Congressmen to exercise restraint. I have seen extracts of the speeches and addresses as reported in the papers which do not betray any spirit of non-violence.

"I may add that whilst I have been seeing the convicted prisoners and discussing with them their attitude to non-violence for my own guidance, the Government have made it plain to me that whatever the prisoners might say to me will not be allowed to determine their policy. They think it will be improper for them to base their action on such assurances as I may issue. I fully appreciate the Government view. My talks with the political prisoners, therefore, are purely for my own personal satisfaction.

"So far as the fourteen Regulation prisoners are concerned, they gave me at the interview that I had with them the following letter: 'During your last visit you expressed your desire to be acquainted with our definite views on certain things. After giving full consideration to the matter we can only reaffirm what we said then. As long as we are in detention, we are unable to discuss our past and future and our political opinion. Particularly when the talk of release is in the air, it affects our sense of self-respect to say anything that may have some bearing on the question of our own release. We hope you will appreciate our standpoint and readily concede that we mean no personal disrespect.' "

"I have found my task Herculean," Gandhi said to the Congress leaders in Calcutta, "and I am sure any other person would have slunk away from it. I have the patience of a Job, but even that was on the point of being exhausted. But now I have a ray of hope bright enough to light my path to Wardha."

Gandhi returned to Segaon full of despondency. The main cause of his depression was that the political life of the country was getting tainted. In the Central Provinces, Mr. Shareef, the Minister of Law, was involved in miscarriage of justice. The crisis there had arisen in connection with the exercise of clemency in respect of a prisoner who was convicted for the offence of committing rape. The minister and the prisoner being both Muslims, the communal feeling in the province ran very high. Elsewhere there was a case of clemency in respect of a prisoner, who had been guilty of an insurance fraud. The reports of bureaucratic behaviour and nepotism were slowly pouring in. Jawaharlal Nehru was ill at ease and he wrote a long letter to Gandhi: "I have been greatly distressed at the turn events have taken in the Congress politics during the last six months. It is distressing to find that even the Gandhi Seva Sangh, which might have set a standard to others and refused to become a party organization intent on winning elections, had descended to the common level. I feel very strongly that the Congress ministers are working inefficiently and not doing much that they could do. They are trying to adapt themselves far too much to the old order and trying to justify it. But all this, bad as it is, might be tolerated. What is far worse is that we are losing the high position that we have built up, with so much labour, in the hearts of the people. We are sinking to the level of ordinary politicians. Partly, of course, this is due to the transition period through which we are passing. Nevertheless, it does show up our failings and the sight is painful. I think there are enough men of goodwill in the Congress to cope with the situation if they set about it in the right way. But their minds are full of party conflicts and the desire to crush this individual or that group. Obviously bad men are preferred to good men, because the former promise to toe the party line. When this happens, there is bound to be deterioration. For months past I have felt I could not function effectively in India as things were going. I have felt out of place. This was one reason—though there were others also—why I decided to go to Europe. I felt that I could be more useful there, and in any event I would freshen up my tired and puzzled mind."

In *Harijan* dated April 23, Gandhi came out with the directive for the Congress ministers and legislators:

"It is often forgotten that the Congress has only moral authority to back it. The ruling power has the martial, though it often dilutes

the martial with the moral. And this vital difference has come to the fore since the assumption of office by the Congress in seven provinces. This office-holding is either a step towards greater prestige or its total loss. If it is not to be a total loss, the ministers and the legislators have to be watchful of their own personal and public conduct. They have to be, like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion in everything. They may not make private gains either for themselves or for their relatives or their friends. If the relatives or friends get any appointment, it must be only because they are the best among the candidates, and that their market value is always greater than what they get under the Government. The ministers and the legislators of the Congress ticket have to be fearless in the performance of their duty. They must always be ready to risk the loss of their seats or offices. Offices and seats in the legislatures have no merit outside their ability to raise the prestige and power of the Congress. And since both depend wholly upon the possession of morals, both public and private, any moral lapse means a blow to the Congress. This is the necessary implication of non-violence. If the Congress non-violence is merely confined to abstention from causing physical hurt to the British officials and their dependants, such non-violence can never bring us independence. It is bound to be worsted in the final heat. Indeed we shall find it to be worthless if not positively harmful, long before the final heat is reached. There is considerable force in the argument of those who have conceived Congress non-violence in that narrow light when they say that it is a broken reed. If on the other hand, non-violence, with all the implications, is the Congress policy, let every Congressman examine himself and reconstruct himself accordingly."

Addressing the newly created National Education Board, Gandhi gave the inner meaning and objective of new education. Even here he was so depressed that he said at the end: "When the new education scheme was launched I was full of self-confidence in which I now feel I am lacking. My words had power of which they seem to be bereft today. This lack of confidence is due not to things without but to things within. It is not that my senses are paralysed. My intellect gives me good work for my age. Nor is it that I have lost faith in non-violence. That faith is burning brighter than ever. But I have for the moment lost self-confidence. I would, therefore, ask you not to accept anything from me implicitly. Accept only what

carries conviction to you. But I am sure that if we could conduct even two schools on the right lines I should dance with joy."

In the earlier part of the discourse, he said: "We have to make of this training-school a school for winning freedom and for the solution of all our ills, of which the chief one is our communal troubles. And for this purpose we shall have to concentrate on non-violence. Hitler's and Mussolini's schools accept as their fundamental principle violence. Ours is non-violence according to the Congress. All our problems have, therefore, to be solved non-violently. Our history, our arithmetic, our science will have a non-violent approach, and the problems in these subjects will be coloured by non-violence. When Madame Halide Edib Hanum delivered her address to the Jamia Millia Islamia on Turkey, I remarked that whereas generally history is a chronicle of kings and their wars, the future history will be the history of man. That can be or is only non-violent. Then we shall have to concentrate not on city industries but on rural industries. We have to revive our village handicrafts. And you can be sure that if we can impart scholastic training through those crafts we can bring about revolution."

Despite weak health and despondency, Gandhi continued to take active interest in the nation's affairs. A crisis was brewing in Orissa where a civilian, Mr. Dain, was appointed to act as Governor during the period of leave of Sir John Hubback. It was actually an appointment of a subordinate official to a position of superiority over the ministry. The Congress Party protested and Gandhi supported the ministers who had threatened to resign. "The whole of the sting lies," wrote Gandhi, "in a subordinate official becoming an acting Governor of his province with whom the ministers are expected to work and almost daily submit documents for his signature and have him preside at their meetings. It is incongruous and unbecoming and reduces autonomy to a farce. If this autonomy is real, and is to blossom forth into full freedom, nothing should be done by superior powers after the previous style. Every one of their acts must conform to a rule or convention. It must not depend upon the caprice of the Governor-General or even the Secretary of State for India. Wherever the prestige of autocracy depended upon its exacting obedience, willing or unwilling, from the ruled, the prestige of the superior authority that has voluntarily divested itself of autocracy and has conferred autonomy should consist in carrying the majority party

with it always. There is no other way that I can think of for the healthy growth of autonomy and avoidance of friction. The prestige of the majority party depends upon never sleeping over the rights of the people, never allowing a single error on the part of the superior authority to escape their vigilant eyes. Looking at it in this light, the Congress, it seems to me, cannot allow the appointment to pass unchallenged.

"I hear that the Orissa ministry has threatened to resign as soon as Mr. Dain occupies the gubernatorial chair. I understand too that an interim ministry will be appointed to carry on the Government. I suppose that as soon as the acting appointment is over and the Governor comes back from leave, by some arrangement the present ministry will be reinstated. That won't be fair play. The Congress will stultify itself to submit to any such arrangement. The governance of a province is not like a play of children. The real minister, who represents the real majority of the Orissa legislators, cannot look unconcerned on the administration of their province passing into the hands of new irresponsible persons appointed at the will of the Governor or acting Governor as the case may be. I do hope, therefore, that the mistake will be undone before it is too late. There are many ways of doing it gracefully. But there must be a will before a graceful way is found. I hope it will be."

The Governor decided not to go on leave and the crisis passed off: "In view of the instability of the political situation which he would be bound to leave to his successor, H. E. the Governor of Orissa does not feel justified in proceeding with his original plan, and considers that he has in the interests of the province no option but to ask for the cancellation of the leave granted to him."

Gandhi turned his attention to another question. Hindu-Muslim problem was getting tougher. A special session of the Muslim League met under Jinnah in April at Calcutta, where a committee was appointed under the Raja Saheb of Pirpore to inquire into "the hardships, ill-treatment, and injustice that is meted out to Musalmans in the various Congress provinces". The League took strong objection to the singing of "Bande Mataram" in the assemblies, the introduction of the Wardha scheme of education and the introduction of Hindustani in the Madras schools.

The negotiations between the Congress and Jinnah were going on behind the scenes for a considerable time. Ultimately a meeting

was fixed between Jinnah and Gandhi on April 28, after about a year's efforts on the part of Gandhi, "to serve as a bridge" between the Congress and the League. In his letter written in October last Gandhi had said: "I carefully went through your speech at Lucknow and I felt deeply hurt over your misunderstanding of my attitude. My letter was in answer to the specially private message you sent me. It represented my deepest feeling. The letter was purely personal. Were you right in using it as you did? Of course, as I read it, the whole of your speech is a declaration of war. Only, I hoped you would reserve poor me a bridge between the two. I see you want no bridge. I am sorry. Only it takes two to make a quarrel. You won't find me one, even if I cannot become apeace-maker."

"I am sorry," replied Jinnah, "you think my speech at Lucknow is a declaration of war. It is purely in self-defence. Kindly read it again and try and understand it." Gandhi was seriously ill when he received this letter in Calcutta a year ago. Jinnah had complained to Azad that Gandhi wrote him no more.

"The reason for my silence," replied Gandhi in February 1938, "is literally and truly in my note. Believe me, the moment I can do something that can bridge the two communities together, nothing in the world can prevent me from so doing. You seem to deny that your speech was a declaration of war, but your later pronouncements too confirm my first impression. How can I prove what is a matter of feeling? In your speeches I miss the old nationalist. When in 1915 I returned from my self-imposed exile in South Africa, everybody spoke of you as one of the staunchest nationalists and the hope of both Hindus and Musalmans. Are you still the same Mr. Jinnah? If you say you are, in spite of your speeches, I shall accept your word. Lastly, you want me to come forward with some proposal. What proposal can I make except to ask you on bended knees to be what I thought you were? But the proposals to form the basis of unity between the two communities surely have got to come from you. It is the cry of a friend, not of an opponent."

"I would not like to say what people spoke of you in 1915," replied Jinnah, "and what they speak and they think of you today. Nationalism is not the monopoly of any single individual. In these days it is very difficult to define it, but I do not wish to pursue this line of controversy any further. As regards the formation of proposals which would form the basis of unity, do you think this can be done

by correspondence? Surely, you know as much as I do, what are the fundamental points in dispute. In my opinion, it is as much up to you to suggest ways and means of tackling the problem. If you genuinely and sincerely desire and feel the moment has come for you to step in and with your position and influence you are prepared to take the matter up earnestly, I will not fail to render all assistance I can."

Gandhi requested Jinnah for taking up personal discussions with the Congress President Bose and added: "So far as I am concerned, just as on Hindu-Muslim question I was guided by Dr. Ansari, now that he is no more in our midst, I have accepted Maulana Azad as my guide. My suggestion, therefore, to you is that conversation should be opened in the first instance between you and Maulana Saheb. But in every case, regard me as at your disposal."

On March 3, Jinnah wrote in rebuff: "In your letter I missed a note of response whether you are of opinion that you see the light now and the moment has come, and secondly if so, whether you are prepared to take the matter up in right earnest; and thirdly, I find there is no change in your attitude and mentality when you say you would be guided by the maulana, as Dr. Ansari is no more. We have reached a stage when no doubt should be left. You recognize the All-India Muslim League as the one authoritative and representative organization of the Musalmans in India, and on the other hand you represent the Congress and other Hindus throughout the country. It is only on that basis we can proceed further and further and devise a machinery for approach. Of course, I shall be glad to see you, although I shall equally be glad to see Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru or Mr. Bose as you may desire. The matter, as you know, will not be clinched without reference again to you by either of them. Therefore, I will prefer to see you first."

"Two questions arising from your letter demand a reply," wrote Gandhi. "You ask me whether I have now seen the light. Much to my regret I have to say, 'No'. If I had, I would proclaim the news from the house-tops. But that limitation does not debar me from taking advantage of the slightest opportunity of finding a way out of the present difficulty. You expect me to be able to speak on behalf of the Congress and other Hindus throughout the country. I am afraid, I cannot fulfil the test. I cannot represent either the Congress or the Hindus in the sense you mean, but I would exert to the utmost

all the moral influence I could have with them in order to secure an honourable settlement."

On the eve of the fateful meeting, Gandhi issued the following statement dated April 22:

"I observe that the forthcoming interview between Shri Jinnah and myself is not only attracting very wide attention, but is also inducing high hopes among some. Then there are some friends who gravely warn me against this visit and against building any hope on the interview. It is better, therefore, for me to take the public into my confidence and tell them why and how I am waiting upon Shri Jinnah on April 28.

"He has himself published my first letter to him, showing my attitude on the question of communal unity, which is as dear to me as life itself. In that letter I clearly stated that all before me was darkness and that I was praying for light. If anything, the darkness has deepened and the prayer become more intense. Add to this the fact that for causes, some of which I know and some of which I do not, for the first time in my public and private life, I seem to have lost self-confidence. I seem to have detected a flaw in me which is unworthy of a votary of truth and ahimsa. I am going through a process of self-introspection, the results of which I cannot foresee. I find myself for the first time during the past fifty years in a slough of despond. I do not consider myself fit for the negotiations or any such thing for the moment. It must be now clear that, if I regarded the forthcoming interview as between two politicians, I should not entertain it in my present depression. But I approach it in no political spirit. I approach it in a prayerful and religious spirit, using the adjective in its broadest sense.

"My Hinduism is not sectarian. It includes all that I know to be best in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism. I approach politics as everything else in a religious spirit. Truth is my religion and ahimsa is the only way of its realization. I have rejected once and for all the doctrine of the sword. The secret stabbings of innocent persons, and the speeches I read in the papers are hardly the thing leading to peace or an honourable settlement.

"I am not approaching the forthcoming interview in any representative capacity. I have purposely divested myself of any such. If there are to be any formal negotiations, they will be between the President of the Congress and the President of the Muslim League.

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi's meeting with Jinnah at his residence, Bombay, April 28, 1938

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi at the Peshawar railway station, May 1, 1938

Photograph : Gopal Chitrakuteer

Gandhi with Ghaffar Khan at Utmanzai, May 1938



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi's visit to the Frontier, May 1938

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

During his Frontier tour, May 1938



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi with Ghaffar Khan and Dr. Khan Sahib, May 1938

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi's arrival at Wardha for Working Committee meeting, July 1938

President Bose in consultation with Gandhi, Delhi, October 1938 *Photograph : Kanu Gandhi*

Gandhi with Congress workers, October 1938 *Photograph : Gopal Chitrakaten*

I go as a lifelong worker in the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. It has been my passion from my early youth. I count some of the noblest Muslims as my friends. I have a devout daughter of Islam as more than a daughter to me. She lives for that unity and she would cheerfully die for it. I had the son of the late Muezzin of the Jumma Masjid of Bombay as a staunch inmate of the ashram. I have not met a nobler man. His morning *azan* in the ashram rings in my ears as I write these lines during midnight. It is for such reasons that I wait on Shri Jinnah.

"I may not leave a single stone unturned to achieve the Hindu-Muslim unity. God fulfils Himself in strange ways. He may, in a manner least known to us, both fulfil Himself through the interview and open a way to an honourable understanding between the two communities. It is in that hope that I am looking forward to the forthcoming talk. We are friends, not strangers. It does not matter to me that we see things from different angles of vision. I ask the public not to attach any exaggerated importance to the interview. But I ask all lovers of communal peace to pray that the God of truth and love may give us both the right spirit and the right word and use us for the good of the dumb millions of India."

On April 28, Gandhi met Jinnah at his residence in Bombay. It was a preliminary informal exchange of views preparatory to more formal negotiations between the Congress and the Muslim League. The following cryptic joint statement was issued: "We had three hours of friendly conversation over Hindu-Muslim question. The matter will be pursued further."

Weak in body and depressed in spirits Gandhi proceeded from Bombay to the hospitable land of the Pathans to fulfil his long-standing promise. The journey through the Punjab was very trying. The crowds would not heed to his warning to avoid noisy demonstrations and receptions at the stations. At some places the din and noise was so trying that Gandhi had to stuff his ears with cotton. On May 1, when he arrived at Nowshera, twenty-five miles from Peshawar, he was accorded a magnificent reception by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Red Shirts. There was no rush, no noise, no bustle. Crowds in Peshawar lined the route for miles, and showed a remarkable discipline. At Dr. Khan Sahib's place where Gandhi was staying, there was perfect peace though large crowds regularly attended his morning and evening prayers.

Rarely Gandhi accepted addresses those days, and he had hardly ever accepted an address of welcome from a Government or semi-Government college. But even in his broken health, he would not refuse an address from the Islamia College students and from the Edward's College in Peshawar. It was said therein: "You have inspired the greatest man amongst us—Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. It was with your inspiration and guidance that he has succeeded in wielding the warring elements into a well disciplined body of men. You have lifted this great struggle of freedom to the highest moral plane." The Islamia College address also referred to the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity and wished him success in his mission.

"It is well," replied Gandhi, "that you referred to the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity, and I would ask you to consider what you can do in furtherance of that great cause. There is no doubt that the work belongs essentially to you of the younger generation. We are now getting old and will soon be gathered to our fathers. You have, therefore, to shoulder the burden. How you can help in achieving the great object you have yourselves shown in your address by your appreciative reference to non-violence and to Khan Saheb's work. I do not know if your reference was deliberate and if you knew the full implication of what you were saying. I do hope you knew what you are saying and that you fully weighed your words. If you have, then I should like to take you a step further. An Urdu paper has stated that my mission in the Frontier Province is the emasculation of the Pathans. Whereas Khan Saheb has invited me here in order that the Pathans might hear the message on non-violence from my own lips, and in order that I might see the Khudai Khidmatgars at close quarters and find out to what extent non-violence has permeated them. That means that Khan Saheb has no such fear as has been expressed by that Urdu newspaper. For he knows that true non-violence is mightier than the mightiest violence. If, therefore, you really understand the essential nature of non-violence and appreciate Khan Saheb's work, you will have to pledge yourselves to non-violence, and that in spite of the fact that violence is so much in the air and we are talking day in and day out of military manoeuvres, aerial action, armaments and naval strength. You have to realize that the power of unarmed non-violence is any day far superior to that of armed force. With me acceptance of non-violence was instinctive, it was part of my training and home influence in

childhood. Its superior strength I came to realize in South Africa where I had to put it against organized violence and racial prejudice. I returned from South Africa with a clear conviction of the superiority of the method of non-violence to that of violence.

"If the method of violence takes plenty of training, the method of non-violence takes even more training, and that training is much more difficult than the training for violence. The first essential of that training is a living faith in God. He who has a living faith in God will not do evil deeds with the name of God on his lips. He will not rely on the sword but will rely solely on God. But you may say that a coward may also pass off as a believer in God, saying he does not use the sword. Cowardice is no sign of belief in God. The true man of God has the strength to use the sword, but will not use it knowing that every man is the image of God.

"Islam, it is said, believes in the brotherhood of man. But you will permit me to point out that it is not the brotherhood of Musalmans only but it is the universal brotherhood, and that brings me to the second essential of the training for non-violence. The Allah of Islam is the same as the God of Christians and the Ishwar of Hindus. Even as there are numerous names of God in Hinduism, there are as many names of God in Islam. The names do not indicate individuality but attributes, and little man has tried in his humble way to describe mighty God by giving Him attributes, though God is above all attributes, indescribable, inconceivable and immeasurable. Living faith in this God means acceptance of the brotherhood of mankind. It also means equal respect for all religions. If Islam is dear to you, Hinduism is dear to me and Christianity is dear to the Christians. It would be the height of intolerance—and intolerance is a species of violence—to believe that your religion is superior to other religions and that you would be justified in wanting others to change over to your faith. The third essential is the acceptance of truth and purity, for one claiming to have an active faith in God cannot but be pure and truthful.

"Now let me tell you that your appreciation of Khan Saheb's services and of non-violence carries all these implications, if the appreciation is genuine. Those who claim to lead have to live up to all the implications and express them in their daily life. Now, you will not be the rank and file, but you will be leaders of your people. If you can live up to the ideal, you may be sure that no one will have

any excuse for saying that non-violence is going to emasculate you. Yours will be the non-violence of the bravest."

Gandhi returned to the same theme in his reply to the Edward's College address which stated: "Born in a land where ahimsa was preached thousands of years ago, it was left to you to enunciate in your own remarkable way the doctrine of non-violent passive resistance as the most irresistible weapon in the hands of the weak and the oppressed."

"Your address is one paean of praise of me," said Gandhi. "Well I have never found it easy to appropriate such praise, but let me tell you that there was no time in my life when I was less able to appropriate such praise than I am today. For a curious sense of despondency has possessed me and I cannot yet get over it. Well, I came here not to make a speech, and I was told that I need not give more than five minutes. But a sentence in your address compels me to devote a few minutes more than I had anticipated. The sentence about non-violent passive resistance at once took my memory back to Germiston in South Africa in 1907. A meeting of European friends was convened to hear me speak on passive resistance, as the movement was then known. The chairman of the meeting there expressed practically the same statement as you have made in your address, namely, that passive resistance was a weapon of the weak. The reference jarred on me and I immediately corrected the speaker. It is curious, if not also surprising, that you should have made the same mistake after all these years of satyagraha in India. We may be weak and oppressed, but non-violence is not a weapon of the weak. It is a weapon of the strongest and the bravest. Violence may well be the weapon of the weak and the oppressed. Being strangers to non-violence, nothing else is open to them. It is, however, true that passive resistance has been regarded as weapon of the weak. That was why the name 'satyagraha' was coined in South Africa to distinguish the movement there from passive resistance.

"Passive resistance is a negative thing, and has nothing of the active principle of love. Satyagraha proceeds on the active principle of love which says, 'Love those that despitefully use you. It is easy for you to love your friends. But I say unto you, love your enemies.' If satyagraha was a weapon of the weak, I should be deceiving Khan Saheb, for no Pathan has yet confessed his weakness. And it was Khan Saheb who told me that he never felt so strong and so

brave as when he, out of a free will, renounced the lathi and the rifle. If it was not the supreme weapon of the brave, I should certainly have hesitated to place it before a brave community like the Pathans. It is with that weapon that Khan Saheb can bid fair to befriend and convert the brave Afridis and the other tribesmen.

"I am glad to have had this opportunity of correcting you. For the moment you realize it, you will enlist yourself as workers in the cause for which Khan Saheb and I are working. That it is difficult to carry conviction I agree. I find it difficult in spite of my conscious practice of it for the last fifty years. But it presupposes purity of the highest type. Infinite patience is required—even the patience of emptying the ocean with a blade of grass."

Owing to weak health, Gandhi had to curtail the original programme. But Khan Saheb would not let him go without giving him a glimpse of the Frontier villages. He, therefore, arranged a brief tour of the Peshawar district. Gandhi went north to Shabkadar, and thence westward to the Ghaffar Khan's own village, Utmanzai, and further west to Mardan.

The route from Peshawar to Mardan lay through numerous villages, and the whole of the countryside were either on the march or standing alongside to greet him, escorted by their leader Fakhr-e-Afghan Badshah Khan. The Pathans, old and young, men and women and children, received their leader and Gandhi, with tears of joy in their eyes. In every village, groups of people waited with a sleek fat goat or a sturdy ram to be presented to Gandhi, as also with their big home-made bread.

Ghaffar Khan knew his people and his land which he had revolutionized. "Matta, Mahatmaji, is a village which has been the scene of fiercest repression," he said "and it is where repression has been fiercest and you find the spirit of the people at its best. Do not be carried away by the fact that the Pathan is a brave hefty fellow. Even he used to cower before a halfpenny-twopenny policeman. Our movement drove this fear out of the Pathans and they stood firm like men, even before the military. These women also took an active part, though they were not arrested." As they drove from Shabkadar to Utmanzai, Gandhi passed a populous little village with substantial houses. "This is Turangzai," said Ghaffar Khan, "the home of the famous Haji, known as the Haji of Turangzai, who is no more. He was a brave soul. The British spread all kinds of stories

about him. For instance, I was described as the Haji's son-in-law by Sir Michael O'Dwyer."

During his brief stay, Gandhi saw several hundreds of Khudai Khidmatgars. At every furlong or two, along his route, they stood day and night. Every address of welcome mentioned of one thing, namely, that should a struggle be necessary in future, the Pathans would not be found wanting. Gandhi devoted all his speeches to the problem and implications of non-violence. Addressing the political conference at Peshawar, attended by some 50,000 people, Gandhi observed:

"In all your three addresses you have told me that you made a triumphant and unique demonstration of non-violence during the civil disobedience campaign, but I have to find out whether you have assimilated non-violence with all its implications. The principal purpose of my visit was to find out whether all that I had heard from Khan Saheb about the Khudai Khidmatgars was true, and I am very sorry that I could not give all the time that was needed in order to find out the truth. However, one conviction I am carrying back with me, namely, the wonderful and affectionate allegiance of the people to Khan Saheb as their general. And not only the Khudai Khidmatgars but I noticed wherever I went that every man, woman and child knew him and loved him. They greeted him most familiarly. His touch seemed to soothe them. And Khan Saheb was most gentle to whoever approached him. The obedience of the Khudai Khidmatgars was unquestioned. All this has filled me with boundless joy. A general merits such obedience. But Khan Saheb has it by right of love unlike the ordinary general who exacts obedience through fear. The question now is what use will Khan Saheb make of the tremendous power of which he finds himself in possession? I cannot answer the question now. Nor can Khan Saheb. Hence it is that, if God wills it, I should like to revisit this wonderful province about October, make a prolonged stay and study in detail the working of non-violence."

A remarkable feature of all the addresses presented to Gandhi was the emphasis on non-violence. In the Mardan Congress Committee address it was said: "We assure you that we can never forget the debt we owe to you for having stood by us in our stricken plight. The recognition of that debt will endure so long as there is one Pathan child living in this land. We are ignorant, we are poor, but

we lack nothing inasmuch as you have taught us the lesson of non-violence, to observe which we regard as our duty, and whose benefits we have seen with our eyes in every part of India." The address at Kalukhan ran in similar vein: "The non-violence you have taught us is capable of preparing us for the highest revolution. It inspires true courage and bravery, it robs one of the fear of man, it makes one humble and god-fearing, and above all it enables us to solve our problems, especially that of communal troubles and poverty and unemployment. It will help everyone to earn honest livelihood."

Gandhi addressed himself exclusively to this subject at Charsada and continued expounding it at numerous meetings that he addressed subsequently. At Charsada over 10,000 people sat patiently to hear Gandhi's speech at ten in the night. "I really wanted to make the acquaintance of those of whom I had heard so much," he said. "I wanted to see with my own eyes how the Khudai Khidmatgars live, move and work. Khan Saheb was also very keen that I must see all these and testify to what extent they had assimilated non-violence. That examination, I am afraid, cannot be carried on during this brief tour. But let me tell you that my desire to live in your midst has increased. Tonight I am thankful that I have been able even to come to Utmanzai and Charsada and to see you all. Khan Saheb and Dr. Khan Sahib I had seen much of even in Wardha, but I wanted to see you and make your acquaintance. A great responsibility rests on your and Khan Saheb's shoulders. You have deliberately chosen a name that carries mighty implications. You might have called yourselves the servants of the people, or of the Pathans, or of Islam; but you chose instead the name Khudai Khidmatgars—Servants of God, that is, servants of humanity which includes Hindus, Musalmans, Christians, Punjab, Gujarat and other parts of India, and also other parts of the world. This very ambitious title implies the acceptance of non-violence. How can a man in the name of God serve humanity by means of the sword? It can be only done by means of a force that God has given us and which is superior to any other force that we can think of. If you do not understand this, you may be sure that the world will laugh at Khan Saheb and also me, as vain hypocrites. Whilst, therefore, I am delighted at the sight of the Khudai Khidmatgars, I am also seized with a kind of fright. Many have warned me against you, but that does not matter if you are true to your creed. Remember that you outnumber volunteers in

the whole of India, and that you are much more disciplined than the volunteers in other parts of India. But unless the discipline is rooted in non-violence, the discipline might prove a source of infinite mischief. I have rarely in my tours seen more orderly and quieter meetings. I congratulate you and express my gratefulness for all the affection you have showered on me. I shall conclude with the prayer that the Frontier Pathans may make not only India free, but teach the world, through an India made non-violently free, the priceless lesson of non-violence."

At Mardan, Gandhi said: "If what you have told me is a solemn promise, and if you can keep it, you may be sure that we will win not only the freedom of India but something more. When we can be ready to sacrifice any number of men in the cause of non-violence, we can easily bid fare to be spared the ghastly spectre of war that is now threatening Europe. We talk of doing everything in the name of God, we call ourselves Khudai Khidmatgars, we profess to have given up the sword, and yet if we have not put the sword and the dagger out of our hearts, we are sure to be disgraced and the name 'Khudai Khidmatgar' will be in a term of reproach."

And then he referred to the incident at Mayar where three Sikhs were done to death by the Pathans. "I have not yet recovered from the shock of the story I heard this afternoon," he said. "The Sikhs from Mayar told me of the tragedy that happened there in broad daylight. So far as I know the victims had done nothing to provoke the ire of the assassins. The assassins did the deed in broad daylight and then bolted away without anyone trying to apprehend them. It is worth pondering over how such a thing could happen when we are all talking of non-violence. It was their duty to catch the culprits. It is their duty to prevent the recurrence of the deed. It is also your duty to befriend the bereaved and to assure the fear-stricken of your sympathy and succour. So long as things of this kind continue to happen in our midst, our non-violence must be in doubt."

His speech at Kalukhan summed up the message of non-violence: "Your address is made up of two parts, one devoted to my praise and the other to non-violence. The first part may be ignored for I am sure that that is going to do good to nobody. In fact, I am sure that if someone offered to sing my praises for twenty-four hours, he would get tired and I should fall fast asleep. What God may have enabled me to do is but a repayment of debt, and he who repays a

debt deserves no praise. In fact if he fails to do so, he may be liable to prosecution.

"What interests me more is what you have stated about non-violence. Let me tell you that I should not have been able to sum up better the characteristics of a non-violent man. But let me tell you what you have not said in your address, and that is the implications of non-violence. You must have heard of the riots in Allahabad and Lucknow. These would be impossible, if there was really non-violence amongst us. There are thousands of members on the Congress register. If they are really non-violent, then these riots should not have occurred. But we not only failed to prevent them, but even sought the aid of the military and the police to quell them. Some of our Congressmen argued with me that our non-violence was limited to our dealings only with the Englishmen. Then I say that the non-violence was not the weapon of the strong, but of the weak. Active non-violence of the brave puts to flight thieves, dacoits, murderers, and prepares an army of volunteers ready to sacrifice themselves in quelling riots, in extinguishing fires and feuds, and so on. You have said that non-violence automatically solves unemployment. You are right, for it rules out exploitation. The non-violent man automatically becomes a servant of God. And he should be ready to render account to God of every minute of his time. May you all be true servants of God and true practisers of non-violence."

On May 8, the Frontier tour ended and Gandhi proceeded to Bombay to take rest at Juhu. "The violence that I see now running through speeches and writings, the corruption and selfishness among the Congressmen, and the petty bickerings fill one with dismay," he said. "In the midst of this, we who know must be unyielding and apply the golden rule of non-co-operation."

Crisis In C. P.

1938

In the third week of May 1938 the Congress Working Committee met in Bombay. The premiers of the Congress provinces were present by special invitation. The matters discussed covered important subjects such as civil liberty, agrarian policy, labour, industrial reconstruction, rural uplift and education.

The complaints against the Congress ministries were scrutinized. In Central Provinces things had come to a head with three of the ministers presenting their resignations to Dr. N. B. Khare, the Chief Minister, and the latter going to the Working Committee with these resignations. Maulana Azad and Sardar Patel examined the charges of corruption and gave their verdict. The grave charges of bribery and corruption were found baseless, but some ministers themselves admitted that they had committed few errors of judgement. There were cases of undeserving persons being appointed to professorships by the university and to the other positions by the ministers themselves. The increasing of the debt limit under the Debt Conciliation Act from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1,000,000 was a grave breach of the Congress pledge given to the people in the election manifesto. The gravest charge was with regard to the conduct of Mr. Shareef, the Minister of Law, who had ordered the premature release of a Muslim inspector of schools who had been convicted of rape of a girl. Dr. Khare and the local Congress committee were inclined to hush up the matter but the Working Committee intervened and the discredited minister resigned. Promise was made to remedy the wrong in every case and the three ministers withdrew their resignations. Dr. Khare had agreed not to take any precipitate action and to consult the Working Committee before he took action with regard to the reconstruction of cabinet or resignation.

In Mysore, where the people had asked for a democratic constitution and got the bullets, the Congress High Command intervened.

In April, the Mysore Government sought a concordat with Sardar Patel, and as a result thereof, the Mysore State Congress was officially recognized and it was agreed that it should co-operate with the Reforms Committee which the Mysore Government had set up to consider the possibilities of political advance, and should fly the Congress flag side by side with the flag of Mysore state on ceremonial occasions. This success was followed up by the Working Committee, which passed a resolution restating the Haripura policy on the one hand and expressing on the other the friendly attitude of the Congress towards Mysore and a hope that responsible government would soon be introduced.

Gandhi was still resting at Juhu but was consulted by the Congress Working Committee members on every important issue. The committee meeting over, President Bose accompanied by Gandhi resumed discussion with Jinnah. On May 26, in the course of the talks, Jinnah insisted that the preamble was to state clearly that the Congress on behalf of the Hindus entered into an agreement with the League representing the Muslims. In one breath Jinnah talked of the "fourteen points", and in another he stated, "We can go on multiplying the list." In June, the League presented the following eleven demands to the Congress:

(1) The "Bande Mataram" song should be given up; (2) Muslim majorities in the provinces, where such majorities exist at present, must not be affected by any territorial redistribution or adjustment; (3) Practice of cow slaughter by Muslims should not be interfered with; (4) Muslims' right to call *azan* and to perform their religious ceremonies should not be interfered with anyway; (5) Muslims' personal law and culture should be guaranteed by a statute; (6) The share of the Muslims in the state services should be definitely fixed in the constitution by statutory enactment; (7) The Congress should withdraw all opposition to the Communal Award and should not describe it as a negation of nationalism; (8) A statutory guarantee should be given that the use of Urdu shall not be curtailed; (9) Representation in local bodies should be governed by the principles underlying the Communal Award; (10) The tricolour flag should be changed or alternatively the flag of the Muslim League should be given equal importance; (11) Recognition of the Muslim League as the one and only authoritative and representative organization of the Indian Muslims.

The talks reached a deadlock. On June 16, Jinnah published the correspondence that had passed between him, Nehru and Gandhi. Communal feelings were very tense and riots broke out. On June 18, Gandhi wrote, after a long interval, a note on the peace brigade:

"The peace brigade should substitute the police and even the military. This reads ambitious. The achievement may prove impossible. Yet, if the Congress is to succeed in its non-violent struggle, it must develop the power to deal peacefully with such situations. Communal riots are engineered by politically-minded men. Many of those who take part in them are under the influence of the latter. Surely it should not be beyond the wit of Congressmen to devise a method or methods of avoiding ugly communal situations by peaceful means. I say this irrespective of whether there is or there is not a communal pact. It cannot be that any party seeks to force a pact by violent means. Even if such a pact were a possibility, it would not be worth the paper on which it might be written. For, behind such a pact there will be no common understanding. What is more, even after a pact is arrived at, it would be too much to expect that there would never be any communal riots."

Gandhi's health was still not normal and for some time he did not write for *Harijan*.

On July 20, Dr. Khare resigned along with two of his colleagues, Gole and Deshmukh. He called upon the three others to resign in pursuance of the parliamentary convention. One of the reasons of this sensational step was friction between the Marathi-speaking and the Hindi-speaking areas of Central Provinces.

Other three ministers—Shukla, Misra and Mehta—hailing from Mahakoshal, refused to resign, specially in view of the fact that the Congress Working Committee was due to meet in three or four days' time, on July 23. The Governor thereupon invited the dissentient ministers to tender their resignation. They asked for time to consult the Congress authorities and put themselves in touch with Rajendra Prasad, a member of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee, who was at Wardha on the night of the 20th. He advised them not to resign and sent letters to Khare, Gole and Deshmukh asking them to withdraw their resignation or at least not to insist upon their acceptance till the Working Committee had met. These letters had no effect. The Mahakoshal ministers informed the Governor that as instructed by the Congress authorities they would not resign. Thereupon the

Governor accepted the resignation of the premier and his two colleagues and terminated the office of the remaining three ministers. At five in the morning of July 21 the Governor called Dr. Khare to form a new ministry and Dr. Khare submitted a list without consulting the Working Committee.

The Parliamentary Sub-Committee met at Wardha and it convinced Dr. Khare that he had committed a grave error of judgement. According to the advice of President Bose, Dr. Khare went to Nagpur and placed his letter of resignation in the hands of the Governor on July 23. "I have come to realize," he wrote, "that in submitting my resignation and forming a new cabinet I have acted hastily and committed an error of judgement. I, therefore, hereby tender my resignation on behalf of myself and my colleagues."

On the evening of the 23rd, Dr. Khare was called to Wardha to meet the Working Committee. He was told that he should resign the leadership of the C.P. Congress party. He accepted this position but said that after his resignation he would again put himself forward as a candidate for the same position. The committee advised him against this course but Dr. Khare insisted upon what he called his right to contest the election for the leadership.

On the 25th evening, Dr. Khare along with President Bose and other members of the Working Committee met Gandhi at Segaon. After some discussion it was proposed that Dr. Khare should make a statement and issue it to the press. Dr. Khare accordingly prepared a statement and told Gandhi, "I place myself unreservedly in your hands." Some additions and some alterations were suggested by Gandhi. Dr. Khare changed his mind and wanted time to consult his friends at Nagpur. He said that if by three p.m. on the 26th the Working Committee did not hear from him, it must be considered that he was not prepared to issue any statement. At the appointed hour, the Working Committee were informed on telephone that Dr. Khare was not prepared to issue the statement in question. The committee thereupon passed the following resolution:

"After having heard the Parliamentary Sub-Committee and having given anxious consideration to the events that have happened since the agreement arrived at in Pachmarhi between the ministers in the presence of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee members and the presidents of the three provincial Congress committees concerned, and after having had several interviews with Dr. Khare, the

Working Committee have reluctantly come to the conclusion that by the series of acts committed by Dr. Khare, culminating in his resignation of his charge and demanding the resignation of his other colleagues, Dr. Khare was guilty of grave errors of judgement, which have exposed the Congress in C. P. to ridicule and brought down its prestige. He was also guilty of gross indiscipline in that he acted in spite of warnings against any precipitate action.

"His resignation was the direct cause for the exercise, for the first time since office acceptance by the Congress, by a Governor of his special powers, whereby Dr. Khare's three colleagues were dismissed. The Working Committee note with satisfaction that these three Congress ministers showed their loyalty to the Congress by declining, without instructions from the Parliamentary Sub-Committee, to tender their resignations which were demanded by the Governor.

"Dr. Khare was further guilty of indiscipline in accepting the invitation of the Governor to form a new ministry, and, contrary to the practice of which he was aware, in actually forming a new ministry and taking the oath of allegiance without any reference to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee and the Working Committee, when he knew that the meetings of these bodies were imminent.

"By all these acts, Dr. Khare has proved himself unworthy of holding positions of responsibility in the Congress organization. He should be so considered till by his services as a Congressman he has shown himself well-balanced and capable of observing discipline and discharging the duties that may be undertaken by him.

"The Working Committee have also come to the reluctant conclusion that the Governor of the C. P. has shown by the ugly haste with which he turned night into day and forced the crisis that has overtaken the province, that he was eager to weaken and to discredit the Congress in so far as it lay in him to do so. The Working Committee hold that, knowing, as he must have, what was going on among members of the cabinet, and the instructions of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee, he ought not to have, with unseemly haste, accepted the resignation of the three ministers and demanded the resignation of the other three, dismissed them on their refusal to resign, and immediately called upon Dr. Khare to form a new ministry and sworn in the available members of the new ministry without waiting for the meeting of the Working Committee which was imminent."

On July 27, an emergency meeting of the C. P. Parliamentary Party was held, at which President Bose was in the chair, and Sardar Patel and other Congress leaders were also present. The chairman began the proceedings by reading the resolution of the Working Committee on Dr. Khare. He then placed the resignation of Dr. Khare from the leadership of the party before the meeting. This was accepted. Mr. Shukla, who was now elected the leader of the party, formed the cabinet of his choice two days later.

The Khare incident raised a bitter controversy. Questions of parliamentary and constitutional propriety were raised that touched and pointed towards the far-reaching principles of democratic government said to be put into jeopardy by the methods adopted by the Congress High Command. In a crowded meeting in Poona, Dr. Khare, explaining the cause of his fall, said that it was a result of "devilish revenge, jealousy and malice". On August 6, Gandhi came out with a devastating criticism of Dr. Khare's behaviour and the indecent haste shown by the C. P. Governor:

"The press cuttings on the ministerial crisis in C. P. make most instructive reading. That the resolution of the Working Committee condemning the action of a veteran leader like Dr. Khare would come in for some severe criticism was a foregone conclusion. But I was not prepared for the ignorance betrayed by the critics on the functions of the Working Committee.

"Dr. Khare was not only guilty of gross indiscipline in flouting the warnings of the Parliamentary Board, but he betrayed incompetence as a leader by allowing himself to be fooled by the Governor or not knowing that by his precipitate action he was compromising the Congress. He heightened the measure of indiscipline by refusing the advice of the Working Committee to make a frank confession of his guilt and withdraw from leadership. The Working Committee would have been guilty of gross neglect of duty, if it had failed to condemn Dr. Khare's action and to adjudge his incompetence. I write these lines in sorrow. It was no pleasure to me to advise the Working Committee to pass the resolution it did. Dr. Khare is a friend. He has run to my aid as a physician when quick medical assistance was needed. He has often come to me for advice and guidance and has expressed himself to be in need of my blessings. I banked on this friendship when, on the 25th ultimo, I appealed to him bravely to stand down and work as a camp-follower. He

himself seemed to be willing but he was badly advised and not only declined to accept the Working Committee's advice but sent a letter instead, questioning the propriety of the whole of the action of the Working Committee in connection with his ill-advised and hasty resignation of office and equally hasty formation of a new cabinet. I hope that on mature reflection he would have seen the error of his conduct and taken the action of the Working Committee in a sportsmanlike spirit. There is no moral turpitude involved in his action. He is a good fighter. He is free with his purse in helping friends. These are qualities of which anyone may be proud. But these qualities need not make the possessor a good prime minister or administrator. I would urge him as a friend to work for the time being as a camp-follower and give the Congress the benefit of the admitted qualities I have recited.

"If he was impatient of his recalcitrant colleagues he should have rushed not to the Governor, but to the Working Committee and tendered his resignation. And if he felt aggrieved by its decision, he could have gone to the A.-I.C.C. But in no case could any minister take internal quarrels to the Governor and seek relief through him without the consent of the Working Committee. If the Congress machinery is slow-moving, it can be made to move faster. If the men at the helm are self-seekers or worthless, the A.-I.C.C. is there to remove them. He erred grievously in ignoring or, what is worse, not knowing this simple remedy and rushing to the Governor on the eve of the meeting of the Working Committee to end his agony.

"It is suggested that the men who succeed him are self-seekers and incapable, and can make no approach to Dr. Khare in character. If they are as they have been portrayed by their critics, they are bound to fail in the discharge of the onerous responsibility they have undertaken. But, here again, the Working Committee has to work within the limits prescribed for it. It cannot impose ministers on a province. After all they are elected members, and if the party that has the power to elect them chooses to do so, the Working Committee has no authority to interfere, so long as they remain under discipline and are not known to be persons unworthy of public confidence. But the crisis should certainly put the ministers on their mettle. It is up to them to show by their conduct that the charges levelled against them are baseless, and that they are capable of discharging their trust ably and selflessly.

"It speaks well for the impartiality of the Indian press in that several journals found it necessary to condemn the action of the Working Committee in pronouncing the opinion it did on the part H. E. the Governor of C.P. played during the unfortunate crisis. I am not in the habit of hastily judging opponents. The criticism of the resolution has left me unconvinced of any injustice done to the Governor by it. In estimating his action, time is of the essence. In accepting the resignations of Dr. Khare and his two colleagues, in demanding resignations from the other three ministers, in expecting an immediate answer, in summarily rejecting their explanation and dismissing them, and for this purpose keeping himself, his staff and the poor ministers awake the whole night, the Governor betrayed a haste which I can only call indecent. Nothing would have been lost if instead of accepting Dr. Khare's resignation there and then, he had awaited the Working Committee meeting which was to meet two days after the strange drama. In dealing with a similar crisis, the Bengal Governor acted differently from the C. P. Governor.

"Of course, the Governor's action conformed to the letter of the law, but it killed the spirit of the tacit compact between the British Government and the Congress. Let the critics of the Working Committee's action read the Viceroy's carefully prepared declaration which, among other declarations, induced the Working Committee to try the office experiment, and ask themselves whether the Governor was not bound to take official notice of what was going on between the Working Committee and Dr. Khare and his colleagues. These indisputable facts lead one to the irresistible conclusion that the Governor, in his eagerness to discredit the Congress, kept a vigil and brought about a situation which he knew was to be uncomfortable for the Congress. The unwritten compact between the British Government and the Congress is a gentleman's agreement in which both are expected to play the game.

"The resolution, therefore, gives the English administrators more credit than evidently the critics would give. Englishmen are sportsmen. They have ample sense of humour; they can hit hard and take a beating also in good grace. I have no doubt that the Governor will take the Congress resolution in good part.

"But whether he does so or not, the Working Committee was bound to express what it felt about the Governor's action. It wishes to avoid a fight if it can; it will take it up, if it must. If the fight

is to be avoided, the Governors must recognize the Congress as the one national organization that is bound some day or other to replace the British Government. The U.P., the Bihar and the Orissa Governors waited for the Congress lead when a crisis faced them. No doubt, in the three cases, it was obviously to their interest to do so. Is it to be said that in C.P. it was obviously to the British interest to precipitate the crisis in order to discomfit the Congress? The resolution of the Working Committee is a friendly warning to the British Government that if they wish to avoid an open rupture with the Congress, the powers that be should not allow a repetition of what happened at Nagpur on the night of 20th July.

"Let us understand the functions of the Congress. For internal growth and administration, it is as good a democratic organization as any to be found in the world. But this democratic organization has been brought into being to fight the greatest imperialist power living. For this external work it has to be likened to an army. And as such, it ceases to be democratic. The central authority possesses plenary powers enabling it to impose and enforce discipline on the various units working under it. Provincial organizations and parliamentary boards are subject to the central authority.

"It has been suggested that whilst my thesis holds good when there is active war in the shape of civil resistance going on, it cannot whilst the latter remains under suspension. But suspension of civil disobedience does not mean suspension of war. The latter can only end when India has a constitution of her own making. Till then, the Congress must be in the nature of an army. Democratic Britain has set up an ingenious system in India which, when you look at it in its nakedness, is nothing but a highly organized efficient military control. It is not less so under the present Government of India Act. The ministers are mere puppets so far as the real control is concerned. The collectors and the police, who 'sir' them today, may at a mere command from the Governors, their real masters, unseat the ministers, arrest them and put them in a lock-up. Hence it is that I have suggested that the Congress has entered upon office not to work the act in the manner expected by the framers, but in a manner so as to hasten the day of substituting it by a genuine act of India's own coining.

"Therefore, the Congress conceived as a fighting machine has to centralize control and guide every department and every Congress-

man however highly placed, and expect unquestioned obedience. The fight cannot be fought on any other terms.

"They say this is fascism pure and simple. But they forget that fascism is the naked sword. Under it Dr. Khare should lose his head. The Congress is the very antithesis of fascism, because it is based on non-violence pure and undefiled. Its sanctions are all moral. Its authority is not derived from the control of the panoplied blackshirts. Under the Congress regime, Dr. Khare can remain the hero of Nagpur, and the students and the citizens of Nagpur, and for that matter other places, may execrate me and the Working Committee without a hair of the demonstrators' heads being touched, so long as they remain non-violent. That is the glory and strength of the Congress, not its weakness. Its authority is derived from that non-violent attitude. It is the only purely non-violent political organization of importance, to my knowledge, throughout the world. And let it continue to be the boast of the Congress that it can command the willing and hearty obedience from its followers, even from veterans like Dr. Khare, so long as they choose to belong to it."

Replying to the virulent propaganda against the Congress High Command and Gandhi, President Bose said: "One cannot fail to notice that in the pro-Khare propaganda which has agitated certain parts of our country, a number of individuals and agencies have joined who have been long known for their antipathy towards the Congress. The present incident has served as a convenient stick to beat the Congress with and I am surprised that Congressmen who have joined hands with them do not realize that they are injuring their own institution by their action. If one considers the matter dispassionately, he will be forced to the conclusion that no injustice has been done to Dr. Khare, nor has he been dealt with too harshly. If one argues that he has been punished too severely, I may point out that a leader has to pay the price of leadership. In the event of success he often gets more praise and credit than he probably deserves, and in the event of failure he frequently gets all the blame or at least much of it. No leader should grudge if on occasions he seems to be judged harshly by his followers or by his countrymen. If a battle is won, the general becomes the hero, if things go wrong, he is punished severely. But no general or minister true to his salt, goes about the country declaiming against his Government or his party, if he considers himself wronged or unfairly dealt with. In no

country would a deposed premier have behaved with such supreme lack of dignity and responsibility as the ex-premier of C.P."

Gandhi analysed the causes of deterioration in the Congress ranks:

"I can't shirk the responsibility by saying I am no longer in the Congress. I have gone out of it for the purpose of serving it better. I know that I still influence the Congress policy. As the author of the Congress constitution of 1920, I must hold myself responsible for such deterioration as is avoidable.

"The Congress started with an initial handicap in 1920. Very few believed in truth and non-violence as a creed. Most members accepted them as a policy. It was inevitable. I had hoped that many would accept them as their creed after they had watched the working of the Congress under the new policy. Only some did, not many. In the beginning stages, the change that came over the foremost leaders was profound. Readers will recall the letters from the late Pandit Motilal Nehru and Deshbandhu Das reproduced in *Young India*. They had experienced a new joy and a new hope in a life of self-denial, simplicity and self-sacrifice. The Ali brothers had almost become fakirs. As we toured from place to place, I watched with delight the change that was coming over the brothers. What was true of these four leaders was true of many others whom I can name. The enthusiasm of the leaders had infected the rank and file.

"But this phenomenal change was due to the spell of 'swaraj in one year'. The conditions I had attached to the fulfilment of the formula were forgotten. Khwaja Saheb Abdul Majid even went so far as to suggest that as the general of the satyagraha army, which the Congress had then become and still is—if only the Congressmen realize the meaning of satyagraha—I should have made sure that the conditions were such that they would be fulfilled. Perhaps he was right. Only I had no such provision in me. The use of non-violence on a mass scale and for political purposes was even for myself an experiment. I could not, therefore, dogmatize. My conditions were meant to be a measure of popular response. They might or might not be fulfilled. Mistakes, miscalculations were always possible. Be that as it may, when the fight for swaraj became prolonged and Khilafat ceased to be a live issue, enthusiasm began to wane, confidence in non-violence even as a policy began to be shaken, and untruth crept in. People who had no faith in the khadi clause stole in and many even openly defied the Congress constitution.

"Evil has continued to grow. The Working Committee has been making some attempt to purge the Congress of the evil but has not been able to put its foot down and risk the loss of numbers on the Congress register. I believe in quality rather than quantity.

"But there is no such thing as compulsion in the scheme of non-violence. Reliance has to be placed upon ability to reach the intellect and the heart—the latter rather than the former.

"It follows that there must be power in the word of a satyagraha general—not the power that the possession of limitless arms gives, but the power that purity of life, strict vigilance, the ceaseless application produce . . .

"My faith in non-violence remains as strong as ever. I am quite sure that not only should it answer all our requirements but that it should, if properly applied, prevent the bloodshed that is going on outside India and is threatening to overwhelm the world.

"My aspiration is limited. God has not given me the power to guide the world on the path of non-violence. But I have imagined that he has chosen me as His instrument for presenting non-violence to India for dealing with her many ills. The progress already made is great. But much more remains to be done. And yet I seem to have lost the power to evoke the needed response from Congressmen in general. It is a bad carpenter who quarrels with his tools. It is a bad general who blames his men for faulty workmanship. I know I am not a bad general. I have wisdom enough to know my limitations. God will give me strength enough to declare my bankruptcy if such is to be my lot. He will perhaps take me away when I am no longer wanted for the work which I have been permitted to do for nearly half a century. But I do entertain the hope that there is yet work for me to do, that the darkness that seems to have enveloped me will disappear, and that, whether with another battle more brilliant than the Dandi march or without, India will come to her own demonstrably through non-violent means. I am praying for the light that will dispel the darkness. Let those who have a living faith in non-violence join me in the prayer."

Storm And Stress

1938

GANDHI was not keeping well for some time. His blood pressure had been behaving erratically and to relieve the strain he had gone into complete silence for an indefinite period since August 1938. He told Professor Tao, "I am exceedingly sorry to receive you when I am in distress. I may not break my silence even to speak to you." The professor asked Gandhi if he had any suggestions to offer in order to fight back the Japanese aggression successfully. "I do not know," replied Gandhi in writing, "that I can throw any light on the problem for the present. My method is so radical that it is wholly inapplicable to your struggle. You cannot all of a sudden change the course of the struggle. A nation in arms cannot all at once give up arms and accept non-violence as its weapon."

Professor Tao would not go without a message from Gandhi. He said even a non-violent message would be welcome, for the Chinese were not averse to non-violence. They were engaged in a war of self-defence, but they never touched non-combatants. "Our enemies are not the Japanese people but the Japanese militarists," he said. Gandhi wrote in reply: "But the self-inflicted restraint will not last when the real stress comes. The temptation will be irresistible. I shall not be surprised. It is inevitable. There is no love in war. We have got to come to the conclusion that either there is to be complete non-violence or undiluted violence."

There was furious anti-Indian rioting in Burma as a result of a tract attacking Buddhism by a Burman Buddhist, who had become a convert to Islam. The press fiercely criticized it and inflamed the Burmans. The result was a savagery which took toll of many innocent lives and destroyed property worth millions. From several platforms in India, inquiry was demanded and also adequate relief to the sufferers. "They will be no insurance against future outbreaks," said Gandhi. "I am concerned with the attainment of permanent

peace in so far as permanence is possible in this very impermanent life. When once religious animosity is roused, it has a knack of repeating itself with periodic regularity, if radical measures are not adopted by the communities concerned. One such measure is cultivation of mutual respect for the several religions professed by the parties. If the Buddhists of Burma have little regard for Islam and the Muslims for Buddhism, the seeds of dissensions are there. They will take little watering to sprout into the savagery such as we saw the other day. I would, therefore, suggest a mutual understanding of these great religions.

"My fear is that at the bottom of the riots there is an anti-Indian feeling due, perhaps, to the economic causes. For, though Muslims seem to have suffered most, Hindus too seem to have come in for a fair share of the Burman fury. Therefore, the Indian settlers must see to it that their dealings with the Burmans are fair and aboveboard. It is said that everything is fair in trade, and that no turpitude attaches to a trader taking advantage of his customer's ignorance and demanding from him even an unconscionable price for his goods. That kind of dealings will surely acerbate feelings.

"The people all over the world have become conscious of their rights. Whereas formerly foreign settlers in other lands did questionable things with impunity, they cannot do so now. Honesty never has been so much proved to be the best policy as it is now for those who do not or cannot back their dishonesty with gunpowder and poison gas. If India is to escape that training and is to adopt, as a free nation, peace as her motto, in every walk of life and in every country where her children go, they will have to practise strictest honesty in her human dealings."

Gandhi was much perturbed over the atmosphere of unruliness prevailing in India. Rowdyism practised by some Congressmen was brought to his notice. "Is violence creeping in?" he asked in *Harijan* dated August 13:

"One complaint is that, in the name of peaceful picketing, pickets are resorting to methods bordering on violence, such as, making a living wall beyond which no one can pass without being hurt or hurting those who make the wall. As the author of the peaceful picketing, I cannot recall a single instance in which I had encouraged such picketing. A friend has quoted Dharasana against me. I had suggested the occupation of salt works of which possession had

to be taken and maintained as against the Government. The action could hardly be called picketing. But to prevent the workers from going to their work by standing in front of them is pure violence and must be given up. The owners of mills or other factories would be fully justified in invoking the assistance of the police, and a Congress Government would be bound to provide it if the Congressmen concerned would not desist.

"And another instance brought to my notice is that of a body of Congressmen having taken possession of the office of a Congress committee. This is surely unpardonable unruliness. The third instance is that of breaking up meetings by shouting and otherwise creating disturbances. The fourth is that of reviling capitalists as a class and inciting people to loot them.

"All these are clear instances of violence and indiscipline. I am told that such unruliness is on the increase. I have before me a letter which bitterly complains that whereas the capitalists used to get justice during the old regime, now under the Congress regime they not only get no justice but are even insulted and humiliated.

"There can be no doubt that the British system favours capitalism. The Congress, which aims at securing full justice for the famishing millions, cannot favour capitalism. But the Congress, so long as it retains non-violence as its basic policy, cannot resort to usurpation, much less allow any class of persons to be insulted or humiliated in any way whatsoever or allow any Congressman or a body of Congressmen to take the law into their own hands.

"Nor can the Congress tolerate violent picketing or speeches inciting to violence.

"If violence is not checked in time, the Congress will go to pieces purely from internal decay. It is up to the heads of provincial and subordinate committees to root out the evil without the least delay. If, on the other hand, Congressmen in general are tired of non-violence, the sooner the first article of the constitution is revised the better it will be for all concerned and the country. Let it not be said of the great organization that it used truth and non-violence as a cloak to cover untruth and violence."

The critics accused Gandhi of his inconsistencies. "During my student days," he replied, "I learnt a saying of Emerson's which I never forgot. 'Foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,' said the sage. I cannot be a little mind, for foolish consistency has

never been my hobgoblin. My critics are shocked over my recent remarks on picketing. They think that I have contradicted my sayings and doings during the civil disobedience campaign. If such is really the case, then my recent writing must be held as cancelling my comparatively remote sayings and doings. Though my body is deteriorating through age, no such law of deterioration, I hope, operates against wisdom which I trust is not only not deteriorating but even growing. Whether it is or not, my mind is clear on the opinion I have given on picketing. If it does not appeal to Congressmen, they may reject it, and if they do, they will violate the laws of peaceful picketing. But there is no discrepancy between my past practice and the present statement.

"The other inconsistency imputed to me has reference to my advice to factory-owners to invoke the assistance of the police to defend themselves against what I have described as violent picketing. Having condemned the ministries for calling in the aid of the police and even the military for suppressing riots, how could I advise the employers of labour to ask for, and the ministers to supply, police assistance, ask my critics.

"I have deplored the necessity for it, as I would deplore such a necessity in the matter of picketing. But till the Congress has developed a peaceful method of dealing with violent crimes, its ministers must use police and, I fear, even the military, if they are to undertake the administration of the affairs of the country in the present stage of its career. But it will bode ill for them and the country if they do not devise methods of dispensing with the use both of the police and the military or at least of visibly reducing their use to such an extent that he who runs may notice the reduction. There certainly is a way. I have ventured to give a faint indication of it. But it may be that the Congress organization is not really fitted for the great task. Without a living faith in non-violence, neither the military nor the police can be supplanted."

At the end of August, Gandhi had to undergo a severe test. Some Harijan satyagrahis marched to Segaon to demand justice from him. "We gave you notice," they declared, "that unless you could have a Harijan appointed as a cabinet minister, we should go to Segaon and do satyagraha there. You asked us to desist. We did so and wrote to you to say so. But after that, having heard nothing from you, we decided to fulfil our promise."

"But what do you want, and what do you mean by satyagraha?" Gandhi asked them in writing, as he was observing silence.

"We want a Harijan to be in the cabinet and a seat reserved in it for a Harijan, as there is one reserved for a Musalman."

"But that is not in my power."

"It is. You were prepared to lay down your life for Harijans at Yeravda and your fast led to the Yeravda pact. You can do everything for Harijans."

"I am doing all that is in my power. But let that be. What do you mean by satyagraha?"

"We will remain here without any food until another party from Nagpur comes to relieve us."

"You are welcome to do so. You want me to provide you with room. Well, we are cramped for space, but you tell us where you will sit, and we will vacate the place for you."

"We will be fasting, and five or six people will have to stay with us to attend to our needs whilst we are fasting."

"I am not concerned with that," said Gandhi. "You select the place and we vacate it for you."

They wanted a room adjoining a hut reserved for women and also the verandah in front of it.

"Explain to them," said Gandhi to an inmate "that the room is reserved for women and they might select some other place."

They would not agree. "Vacate it then," said Gandhi. "Let not Ba be perturbed. She can come and occupy my room, and I will go there or in the house outside which is built for Aryanayakam."

In came Kasturbai and explained that Gandhi need not worry about her and the other women. "We will somehow shift for ourselves with one room, and we will have a bamboo partition in the verandah," she said with a smile. He wrote: "Receive them with a smile. Tell them, 'You are as good as my sons and quite welcome.'" She laughed and said: "Of course I will receive them with a smile. But you better tell them they are your sons. I haven't it in me."

On September 3, Gandhi came out with an article on "Choice before Congressmen":

"It looks as if the Congressmen are not able to digest the power that has come to the Congress. Every one wants to have a share in the spoils of office. This is not the way to win swaraj, nor is it the way to work the office programme. The holding of any office in the

Congress Government must be in the spirit of service without the slightest expectation of personal gain. If *A* is satisfied in ordinary life with getting Rs. 25 per month, he has no right to expect Rs. 250 on becoming a minister or on obtaining any other office under the Government. And there are many Congressmen who are taking only Rs. 25 per month in voluntary organizations and who are well able to shoulder the ministerial responsibility. Bengal and Maharashtra are teeming with able men who have dedicated themselves to public service on a mere pittance and who are well able to give a good account of themselves, no matter where they are put. But they are not to be tempted to leave the fields they have chosen, and it would be wrong to drag them out of their invaluable self-chosen obscurity. It is true all the world over, and more true perhaps of this country, that as a rule the best and the wisest men will not become ministers or accept positions under governments. But here I have digressed.

"We may not always get the best and the wisest men and women to run the Congress governments, but swaraj will become a distant dream if the ministers and other Congressmen holding offices are not selfless, able and incorruptible. We are not likely to have such men, if the Congress committees become job-hunting arenas in which the most violent would win.

"How to preserve the purity of the organization is the question. Any person who subscribes to the credal article of the Congress and pays four annas can demand registration as a member. Many sign the Congress pledge without believing in the necessity for observing truth and non-violence as the conditions of the attainment of swaraj. Let no one cavil at my use of the expression 'truthful and non-violent' as synonymous with 'legitimate and peaceful'. From the very commencement of the Congress constitution, I have used those adjectives without challenge. The word non-violence was first introduced by me in the resolution on non-co-operation carried in Calcutta by the Congress. Can anything be untruthful and yet be legitimate, violent and yet be peaceful? Be that as it may, I claim that those who commit a breach of these two primary conditions, no matter by what adjectives they are known, can have no place in the Congress organization so long as it is governed by the present constitution.

"Similarly those who do not use khadi as habitual wear have no place in any Congress committee. This condition should apply also

to those who do not carry out the vital resolutions of the Congress, A.-I.C.C., or the Working Committee. My prescription would be that those who commit a breach of any of these conditions should automatically cease to belong to the Congress. It may be urged that the remedy is too drastic. It is, if it is regarded as a punishment. If it is the automatic result of a particular act or omission of a person, it is no punishment. I know that thrusting my finger into a furnace will surely burn it and still I thrust it; my suffering is no punishment, it is the natural consequence of my action. Punishment depends upon the will of the judge. Natural consequences are independent of any person's will.

"It will be urged that under these conditions the Congress will cease to be a democratic organization, it will become a close corporation. I hold a wholly contrary view.

"Democracy of the West is, in my opinion, only so called. It has germs in it, certainly, of the true type. But it can only come when all violence is eschewed and all malpractices disappear. The two go hand in hand. Indeed malpractice is a species of violence. If India is to evolve the true type, there should be no compromise with untruth or violence. Ten million men and women on the Congress register with violence and untruth in their breasts would not evolve real democracy or bring swaraj. But I can conceive the possibility of ten thousand Congressmen and women who are cent per cent true, and free having to carry the burden of innumerable doubtful companions bringing swaraj...

"With all the earnestness that I can command, I, therefore, plead with every Congressman, who believes in his pledge, to make his own choice: either to apply the purge I have suggested or if that is not possible, because of the Congress being already overmanned by those who have lost all faith in its creed and its constructive programme on which depends its real strength, to secede from it for its own sake and prove his living faith in the creed and programme by practising the former and prosecuting the latter as if he had never seceded from the Congress of his ideal. If one or the other thing is not done, then I see grave danger of the Congress collapsing by the weight of its own weaknesses.

"It has given me no pleasure to write these lines. But having felt the urge, I would have been untrue to the Congress if I had not uttered the warning. It is the voice of the silence. For, the reader

should know that I took silence over a fortnight ago for an indefinite period. It has given me peace I cannot describe. And it enables me to commune with nature."

It was a period of storm and stress. With the partial success of the people of Mysore state, the freedom movement spread in the other states. As a result, there was intense repression in Travancore and Hyderabad. Gandhi now stepped in and wrote at length on "States and Responsibility":

"I am inundated with telegrams describing the fearful repression going on in several parts of Travancore. I do not ask that this testimony should be believed as against the state communiques. But I do suggest that there are, as usual, two sides to the question and that there is a strong case for an impartial inquiry.

"But whether there is an inquiry or not, the duty of the Travancore State Congress is clear—on the one hand to see that there is no violence of any sort done by them or their sympathizers, and on the other to go on with the programme of direct action till Travancore Government relent or the last member is accounted for.

"I should like to state one limitation of ahimsa. If a wrongdoer banks upon the ahimsa of his victim and goes on heaping wrong upon wrong till every one of the victims is crushed, a cry from the surrounding atmosphere arises and the force of public opinion or the like overtakes the wrongdoer. But no satyagrahi should think that he has never to suffer unto death. His victory lies in the defiance by his unconquerable spirit of death and loss of property. The wrongdoer's certain defeat lies in his utter failure to bend or to break the spirit of his victim.

"If the states persist in their obstinacy and hug their ignorance of the awakening that has taken place throughout India, they are courting certain destruction. I claim to be a friend of the states. Their service has been an heirloom in my family for the past three generations, if not longer. I am no blind worshipper of antiquity. But I am not ashamed of the heirloom. All the states may not live. The biggest ones can live only if they will recognize their limitations, become servants of their people, trustees of their welfare and depend for their existence not on arms, whether their own or the British, but solely on the goodwill of their people. Frightfulness will feed the fire of violence that one feels smouldering everywhere. If the states are badly advised and they rely upon organized violence for resisting

the just demands of their people, non-violent, so far generated in the country as a means of redressing social injustice, will not protect them. If it had grown into a Himalayan oak, it would have passed any test however severe. But, sad to confess, it has not gone deep enough into the Indian soil.

"The Hyderabad communiques have, therefore, come upon me as a painful surprise. Sir Akbar is a great educationist. He is also a philosopher. It is passing strange that he should have lent himself to the reactionary declarations which condemn an organization even before it has begun to function. What can be the meaning of communalism in a state which is overwhelmingly one population according to religion? What can communalism mean in, say, Kashmir or the Frontier, where the population is predominantly of one faith? The doctrine of minority is a good hobby to ride up to a point. But it must be at least numerically a fair minority. Even a minority of one can expect perfect justice. But it has no status in the political field. When a person belonging to an insignificant minority mounts to power he does so not as a representative of his group but by sheer merit. The State Congress in Hyderabad can never be communal in the sense in which the word is understood in India. An institution in the Frontier Province need not be dubbed communal merely because it has no Hindu member. Of course, an organization may be frankly communal in outlook. But the Hyderabad communiques make a subtle distinction and aver that there is presence in the state Congress of persons predominantly communal in outlook. What is more, the state Congress has come out with a statement totally repudiating the suggestion of communalism.

"And then comes even the erstwhile progressive Rajkot. Only the other day, it had a representative assembly elected under universal suffrage, and had complete liberty of speech under its late lamented ruler. One may hope that after the recent display (so far as I can see, wholly uncalled for) of force, the political organization of Rajkot will be not only permitted to function undisturbed but that its demands will be met in a spirit of justice.

"Whatever happens in the three states named or in any other, let the people of the states recognize that their salvation depends wholly on their own strength whose generation in turn depends upon an exhibition in action of complete non-violence and truth. They must realize that it is utterly impossible openly to organize along

violent lines large masses of mankind deprived of arms and almost from time immemorial brought up as a non-military nation."

The correspondence increased enormously and under the crushing work, Gandhi's secretaries, Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal, fell ill. In *Harijan* dated September 24, Gandhi addressed "To the Readers" the following: "I am writing this note during the small hours of Sunday morning, having got up at 1.30 a.m. for finishing *Harijan* work. But I dare not repeat such liberty without the danger of a sudden collapse. I have only limited physical energy left in me. It has, therefore, to be sparingly used . . . *Harijan* is not a newspaper, it is a 'views'-paper representing those of one man. Even Mahadev and Pyarelal may not write anything whilst I am alive. I am myself daily growing in the knowledge of satyagraha. I have no text-book to consult in time of need, not even the Gita which I have called my dictionary. Satyagraha as conceived by me is a science in the making. It may be that what I claim to be a science may prove to be no science at all and may well prove to be the musings and doings of a fool, if not a madman. It may be that what is true in satyagraha is as ancient as the hills. But it has not yet been acknowledged to be of any value in the solution of the world problems or rather the one supreme problem of war. It may be that what is claimed to be new in it will prove to be really of no value in terms of that supreme problem. It may be that what are claimed to be victories of satyagraha, that is, ahimsa, were in reality the victories not of truth and non-violence but of fear of violence. These possibilities have always been in front of me. I am helpless. All I present to the nation for adoption is an answer to prayer or, which is the same thing, constantly waiting on God."

During the last week of September, the A.-I.C.C. met at Delhi and took note of repression in Travancore, Hyderabad, Dhenkanal, Talcher and Kashmir, and reiterated its policy of non-interference, and consistently with its resources, to help the states people in every way open to the Congress.

The Working Committee resolution on civil liberty which was passed by the A.-I.C.C. in the teeth of opposition from the leftists read as follows: "Inasmuch as people including a few Congressmen have been found in the name of civil liberty to advocate murder, arson, looting and class war by violent means, and several papers are carrying on a campaign of falsehood and violence calculated

to incite the readers to violence and to lead to communal conflicts, the Congress warns the public that civil liberty does not cover acts of or incitement to violence or promulgation of palpable falsehoods. In spite, therefore, of the Congress policy on civil liberty remaining unchanged, the Congress will, consistently with its tradition, support the measures that may be undertaken by the Congress governments for the defence of life and property."

With regard to the happenings in Burma, Palestine and Czechoslovakia, the A.-I.C.C. adopted the Working Committee resolutions unanimously. The Burmese people were approached in the spirit of cordiality and the Indian settlers were advised to rely upon their own ability, by strictly just dealings to cultivate friendship with the Burmans than upon any aid that might be rendered by the mother country or the Government of India. The committee condemned the decision of Great Britain as a mandatory power to bring about the partition of Palestine. "The A.-I.C.C. trusts that Britain would be well advised in revoking its present policy and leave the Jews and the Arabs to amicably settle the issues between them, and appeals to the Jews not to take shelter behind British imperialism."

The resolution on Czechoslovakia was as follows: "The Working Committee has been following with great interest the events as they have been developing in Europe. And it views with grave concern the unabashed attempt that is being made by Germany to deprive Czechoslovakia of its independence or to reduce it to impotence. The Working Committee sends its profound sympathy to the brave people of Czechoslovakia in their struggle to preserve their freedom. Being themselves engaged in a war—non-violent but none the less grim and exacting—against the greatest imperialist power on the earth, India cannot be but deeply interested in the protection of Czechoslovak freedom. The committee hopes that the better part of humanity will still assert itself and save humanity from the impending catastrophe."

While continuing to observe silence, Gandhi actively participated in the proceedings of the Working Committee. He took a special notice of "that unfortunate walk-out" of some leftist members from the A.-I.C.C. during the debate on civil liberties resolution. "The protest," he said, "was against the majority refusing to accept amendments which cut at the root of the resolution which was regarded as vital to the existence of the Congress in its present form.

"The walk-out has served one good purpose. It has brought out in clear light the fact that the Congress is not today the homogeneous body it used to be. It has members and parties who have no faith in its creed or its constructive programme, especially, khadi and prohibition.

"In these circumstances the Congress must cease to be a compact fighting organization engaged in a life and death struggle against the most experienced and organized corporation in the world. It has been since 1920 like an army in action, having one will, one policy, one aim and exact discipline. All this must go, if the protestees can have their own way. In the first place there can be no amendment of, or protest against, accepted policies. But even if such is permissible, there should be perfect and willing obedience after the rejection of amendments and protests. Opposition in the Congress is not to be compared to the opposition, say, in the Central Assembly. There the opposition has little in common with the Government. In the Congress there can only be those who willingly and whole-heartedly subscribe to its creed. Those who do not want independence cannot become its members, nor can those who do not believe in truth and non-violence, khadi or communal unity, or total abolition of untouchability among the Hindus, or the total prohibition of drink and intoxicating drugs.

"It is up to those who do not believe in the fundamental policy of the Congress seriously to consider whether they would not serve the Congress and the country better by remaining outside the Congress and converting the people to their own view of conducting the campaign rather than by remaining within and obstructing those who do not see eye to eye with them and yet are in the unfortunate position of having the majority on their side. It is equally the duty of the majority also to consider how best to deal with those who will resort to obstructive tactics. My opinion based on experience is that if, after a friendly discussion with the obstructionists—if the use of that word is permissible to describe them—it is found that they believe it to be their duty to continue obstruction, it would conduce to the good of the country to hand over the reins to the minority and themselves follow the existing Congress constructive programme without using the Congress name. All this can succeed beyond expectations, if it is done without huff, without malice and without bitterness, and merely to meet a situation that is becoming

impossible. If chaos is to be prevented, proper measures must be taken in time."

The Working Committee prolonged its session in Delhi, for the war-clouds threatened to burst over Europe on the issue of Czechoslovakia. The committee discussed this question for eleven days. But before they could arrive at any definite final conclusion, the cloud had lifted and the Munich Pact was signed on September 30. To Gandhi, this occasion gave the opportunity to reiterate his views. "If the Congress could put the whole of its creed of non-violence into practice on this occasion," he remarked to a colleague, "India's name would become immortal. But I know today it is only a dream of mine." He told some people who had interviewed him that "you may rest assured that whatever happens there will be no surrender to the Government. For me, even if I stand alone, there is no participation in the war even if the Government should surrender the whole control to the Congress." To a friend who doubted whether enough people would be found to stand by him in his firm resolve, Gandhi replied: "Who would have thought the aeroplanes to be a practical reality fifty years ago? Who would have imagined in this country, thirty years ago, that thousands of innocent men, women and children would be really smiling to march to the prison? The weapon of non-violence does not need supermen or superwomen to wield it; even beings of common clay can use it and have used it before this with success. At any rate, fifteen members of the Working Committee expressed their readiness to put their ahimsa to the test. That was more than I was prepared for."

On the eve of his departure from Delhi, he wrote the following article for *Harijan* dated October 8:

"One must feel happy that the danger of war has been averted for the time being. Is the price paid likely to be too great? Is it likely that honour has been sold? Is it a triumph of organized violence? Has Herr Hitler discovered a new technique of organizing violence which enables him to gain his end without shedding blood? I do not profess to know European politics. But it does appear to me that small nationalities cannot exist in Europe with their heads erect. They must be absorbed by their larger neighbours. They must become vassals.

"Europe has sold her soul for the sake of a seven days' earthly existence. The peace that Europe gained at Munich is a triumph of

violence; it is also its defeat. If England and France were sure of victory, then they would certainly have fulfilled their duty of saving Czechoslovakia or of dying with it. But they quailed before the combined violence of Germany and Italy. But what have Germany and Italy gained? Have they added anything to the moral wealth of mankind?

"In penning these lines my concern is not with the great powers. Their height dazes me. Czechoslovakia has a lesson for me and for us in India. The Czechs could not have done anything else, when they found themselves deserted by their two powerful allies. And yet I have the hardihood to say that if they had known the use of non-violence as a weapon for the defence of national honour, they would have faced the whole might of Germany with that of Italy thrown in. And they would have spared England and France the humiliation of suing for a peace which was no peace; and to save their honour they would have died to a man without shedding the blood of the robber. I must refuse to think that such heroism, or call it restraint, is beyond human nature. Human nature will only find itself when it fully realizes that to be human it has to cease to be beastly or brutal. Though we have the human form, without the attainment of the virtue of non-violence, we still share the qualities of our remote reputed ancestor the orangoutang.

"These are not idle words I am writing. Let the Czechs know that the Working Committee wrung itself with pain, while their doom was being decided. The pain was quite selfish in a way. But on that account it was the more real. For though numerically we are a big nation, in terms of Europe, in terms of organized scientific violence, we are smaller than Czechoslovakia. Our liberty is not merely threatened, we are fighting to regain it. The Czechs are fully armed; we are wholly unarmed. And so the committee sat to deliberate what its duty was by the Czechs, what part the Congress was to play if the war-clouds burst on us. Were we to bargain with England for our liberty and appear to befriend Czechoslovakia, or were we to live up to the creed of non-violence and say in the hour of trial for afflicted humanity that, consistently with our creed, we could not associate ourselves with war even though it might ostensibly be for the defence of Czechoslovakia whose very existence was threatened for no fault of hers, or for the only fault that she was too small to defend herself single-handed? The Working Committee

had almost come to the conclusion that it would deny itself the opportunity of striking a bargain with England but would make its contribution to world peace, to the defence of Czechoslovakia and to India's freedom by declaring to the world by its action that the way to peace with honour did not lie through the mutual slaughter of the innocents, but that it lay only and truly through the practice of organized non-violence even unto death.

"And this was but the logical and the natural step the Working Committee could have taken, if it was to prove true to its creed. If India could gain her freedom through non-violence, as Congressmen are to believe they can, she could also defend her own freedom by the same means, and hence *a fortiori* could a smaller nation like Czechoslovakia.

"I do not know what actually the Working Committee would have done if the war had come. But the war is only postponed. During the breathing time, I present the way of non-violence for acceptance by the Czechs. They do not yet know what is in store for them. They can lose nothing by trying the way of non-violence. The fate of Republican Spain is hanging in the balance. So is that of China. If in the end they all lose, they will do so not because their cause is not just, but because they are less skilled in the science of destruction or because they are undermanned. What would the Republican Spain gain if it had Franco's resources, or China if she had Japan's skill in war, or the Czechs if they had the skill of Herr Hitler? I suggest that if it is brave, as it is, to die to a man fighting against odds, it is braver still to refuse to fight and yet to refuse to yield to the usurper. If death is a certainty in either case, is it not nobler to die with the breast bared to the enemy without malice against him within?"

On the way to the North-West Frontier, Gandhi wrote another article, "If I were a Czech", dated October 6:

"If I have called the arrangement with Herr Hitler 'peace without honour', it was not to cast any reflection on British or French statesmen. I have no doubt that Mr. Chamberlain could not think of anything better. He knew his nation's limitations. He wanted to avoid war, if it could be avoided at all. Short of going to war, he pulled his full weight in favour of the Czechs. That it could not save honour was no fault of his. It would be so every time there is a struggle with Herr Hitler or Signor Mussolini.

"It cannot be otherwise. Democracy dreads to spill blood. The philosophy for which the two dictators stand calls it cowardice to shrink from carnage. They exhaust the resources of the poetic art in order to glorify organized murder. There is no humbug about their word or deed. They are ever ready for war. There is nobody in Germany or Italy to cross their path. Their word is law.

"It is different with Mr. Chamberlain or M. Daladier. They have the Parliaments and the Chambers to please. They have parties to confer with. They cannot maintain themselves on a perpetual war footing, if their language is to have a democratic accent about it.

"The science of war leads one to dictatorship pure and simple. The science of non-violence can alone lead one to pure democracy. England, France and America have to make their choice. That is the challenge of the two dictators.

"Russia is out of the picture just now. Russia has a dictator who dreams of peace and thinks he will wade to it through a sea of blood. No one can say what Russian dictatorship will mean to the world.

"It was necessary to give this introduction to what I want to say to the Czechs and through them to all those nationalities which are called 'small' or 'weak'. I want to speak to the Czechs because their plight moved me to the point of physical and mental distress and I felt that it would be cowardice on my part not to share with them the thoughts that were welling up within me. It is clear that the small nations must either come or be ready to come under the protection of the dictators or be a constant menace to the peace of Europe. In spite of all the goodwill in the world England and France cannot save them. Their intervention can only mean bloodshed and destruction such as has never been seen before. If I were a Czech, therefore, I would free these two nations from the obligation to defend my country. And yet I must live. I would not be a vassal to any nation or body. I must have absolute independence or perish. To seek to win in a clash of arms would be pure bravado. Not so, if in defying the might of one who would deprive me of my independence I refuse to obey his will and perish unarmed in the attempt. In so doing, though I lose the body, I save my soul, my honour.

"This inglorious peace should be my opportunity. I must live down the humiliation and gain real independence.

"But, says a comforter, 'Hitler knows no pity. Your spiritual effort will avail nothing before him.'

"My answer is, 'You may be right. History has no record of a nation having adopted non-violent resistance. If Hitler is unaffected by my suffering, it does not matter. For, I shall have lost nothing worth. My honour is the only thing worth preserving. That is independent of Hitler's pity. But as a believer in non-violence, I may not limit its possibilities. Hitherto he and his likes have built upon their invariable experience that men yield to force. Unarmed men, women and children offering non-violent resistance without any bitterness in them will be a novel experience for them. Who can dare say that it is not in their nature to respond to the higher and finer forces? They have the same soul that I have.'.

"But says another comforter, 'What you say is all right for you. But how do you expect your people to respond to the novel call? They are trained to fight. In personal bravery they are second to none in the world. For, you know, to ask them to throw away their arms and be trained for non-violent resistance seems to me to be a vain attempt.'

" 'You may be right. But I have a call I must answer. I must deliver my message to my people. This humiliation has sunk too deep in me to remain without an outlet. I, at least, must act up to the light that has dawned on me.'

"This is how I should, I believe, act if I was a Czech. When I first launched out on satyagraha, I had no companion. We were 13,000 men, women and children against a whole nation capable of crushing the existence out of us. I did not know who would listen to me. It all came as in a flash. All the 13,000 did not fight. Many fell back. But the honour of the nation was saved. New history was written by the South African satyagraha.

"A more apposite instance, perhaps, is that of Khan Saheb Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the servant of God as he calls himself, the pride of Afghan, as the Pathans delight to call him. He is sitting in front of me as I pen these lines. He has made several thousand of his people throw down their arms and he thinks that he has imbibed the lesson of non-violence. He is not certain of his people. I have come to the Frontier Province, or rather he has brought me, to see with my own eyes what his men here are doing. I can say in advance and at once that these men know very little of non-violence. All the treasure they have on earth is their firm faith in their leader. I do not cite these soldiers of peace as at all a finished illustration. I cite them as an

honest attempt being made by a soldier to convert fellow soldiers to the ways of peace. I can testify that it is an honest attempt, and whether in the end it succeeds or fails, it will have its lessons for satyagrahis of the future. My purpose will be fulfilled if I succeed in reaching these men's hearts and making them see that if their non-violence does not make them feel much braver than the possession of arms and the ability to use them, they must give up their non-violence, which is another name for cowardice, and resume their arms which there is nothing but their own will to prevent them from taking back.

"I present Dr. Benes with a weapon not of the weak but of the brave. There is no bravery greater than a resolute refusal to bend the knee to an earthly power, no matter how great, and that without bitterness of spirit and in the fullness of faith that the spirit alone lives, nothing else does."

Frontier Tour

1938

On October 9, Ghaffar Khan took Gandhi away from Peshawar to his own residence at Utmanzai. Set in the midst of a landscape of pastoral beauty, on the bank of the Swat river, the small village of Utmanzai was very peaceful. The host left Gandhi free to follow his regime of almost unbroken silence. There were no public functions and no interviews. Being anxious for the guest's safety, Ghaffar Khan had posted on the roofs of his residence Khudai Khidmatgars to keep watch during the nights. When Gandhi came to know of the armed guards, he objected and said that whilst he would tolerate policing for others, he could not tolerate armed guards for his own protection. The guards were removed, but Ghaffar Khan insisted on unarmed night-watches to which he submitted.

To Gandhi this little incident seemed to be symbolical of another and bigger issue that confronted the satyagrahis. Just as a satyagrahi must renounce the use of arms for self-protection, even so, if India was ever to attain non-violent swaraj, it must first be able to defend herself against the trans-border raids without the help of the police and the military. In the Frontier Province there were one lakh of Khudai Khidmatgars, pledged to the creed of non-violence. If they had really assimilated the principle of non-violence, said Gandhi, if their non-violence was the true non-violence of the brave and not a mere expedient or a lip profession, they ought to be able to befriend the trans-border raiders by their loving service, and to wean them from their raiding habit. Indeed they would win independence for India and set an example to the whole world.

"The conviction is growing upon me, Khan Saheb," Gandhi remarked, "that unless we develop the capacity to put a stop to these Frontier raids without the help of the police and the military, it is no use the Congress remaining in office in this province, as in that case we are bound to be defeated in the end. A wise general does

not wait till he is actually routed; he knows he would not be able to hold." "For years," he continued, "it has been a pet dream of mine to be able to go among and mix with the trans-border tribes. I am quite sure that the only way of bringing about a permanent settlement of the Frontier problem is through the way of peace and reason. If our Khudai Khidmatgar organization is what its name signifies and what it ought to be, I am sure we can achieve that feat today. I am, therefore, anxious to find out exactly how far the Khudai Khidmatgars have understood and assimilated the spirit of non-violence, where they stand and what your and my future line of action should be."

"In South Africa," he said, "a small band of 13,000 satyagrahi countrymen of ours were able to hold their own against the might of the Union Government. General Smuts could not turn them out as he was able to the 50,000 Chinese who were driven out bag and baggage in less than six months and that without compensation. He would not have hesitated to crush us, if we had strayed from the path of non-violence. What could not an army of one lakh of Khudai Khidmatgars trained in the use of the non-violence method achieve?"

Gandhi told Ghaffar Khan that he would like to have a heart-to-heart talk with as many Khudai Khidmatgars as possible so that he might be able to understand them thoroughly and they him. Accordingly he met thirteen officers of the Charsada tahsil on the 11th and the 12th of October at Utmanzai, and another group at Peshawar on the 15th. At both places, in reply to his questions they assured him that their adherence to the principle of non-violence was implicit and unqualified. They even went so far as to declare that even if the impossible happened and Ghaffar Khan himself turned away from the path of non-violence, they would not give up their faith in non-violence.

Gandhi told them that though it sounded to him as an overbold statement for them to make, still, as was his wont, he would take them at their word. He explained to them in detail what his conception of the nature and implications of non-violence was. It was comparatively easy to maintain a passive sort of non-violence, when the opponent was powerful and fully armed. But would they remain non-violent in their dealings among themselves and with their own countrymen, when there was no extraneous force to restrain

or to check them? Again was theirs the non-violence of the strong or that of the weak? If theirs was non-violence of the strong, they should feel the stronger for their renunciation of the sword. But if that was not the case with them, it was better for them to resume their weapons which they had of their own free will discarded. For it was much better for them to be brave soldiers in arms than to be disarmed and emasculated."

"A charge has been levelled against me and Khan Saheb," he added, "that we are rendering India and Islam a disservice by presenting the gospel of non-violence to the brave and warlike people of the Frontier. My faith is that by adopting the doctrine of non-violence in its entirety, you will be rendering a lasting service to India and to Islam which just now it seems to me is in danger."

"A Khudai Khidmatgar," he said, "has first to be a man of God, a servant of humanity." It would demand of him purity in deed, word and thought, and ceaseless and honest industry, since purity of mind and idleness were incompatible. They should, therefore, learn some handicraft which they could practise in their own homes. This should preferably be ginning, spinning and weaving as those alone could be offered to millions in their own homes. They should further learn Hindustani, as that would enable them to cultivate and enlarge their minds and bring them in touch with the wider world. It was up to them also to learn the rudiments of the science of sanitation and first aid, and last but not least they should cultivate an attitude of equal respect and reverence towards all religions.

On October 15, the period of rest came to an end and Gandhi set out on a tour of the interior of the Mardan district and Nowshera, the remaining tahsil of Peshawar district. The itinerary was brief and arranged in easy stages. The journey was by motor van and as he sped in company of Ghaffar Khan, practically the entire village turned out of doors to have a glimpse of their distinguished guest. "We want you to settle in our midst and make our province your home," said the villagers near Utmanzai. "We have a right prescriptive over you," said a leading Khan. " You kept our Badshah Khan in your part of the country under duress for six years. We may keep you here as prisoner of our love at least for six years."

From Peshawar to Nowshera was one hour's drive and Gandhi reached his destination after crossing the Kabul river, in the afternoon of October 16. At Nowshera, Gandhi had a meeting with the

officers of the Khudai Khidmatgars. In the course of an address, they thanked him for having presented to them the weapon of non-violence which was infinitely superior to and more potent than the weapons of steel and brass. They assured Gandhi that their faith in non-violence was absolute as had been amply proved by their conduct during the civil disobedience movement and they would never go back upon it.

"I accept *in toto* your assurance," replied Gandhi, "that you have fully understood the principle of non-violence and that you want to hold on to it always. I congratulate you on it, and I further say that if you can put the whole of that doctrine into practice, you will make history. You claim to have one lakh of Khudai Khidmatgars on your register which exceeds the total number of the Congress volunteers as it stands today. You are all pledged to selfless service. You get no monetary allowance and you have even to provide your own uniforms. You are a homogeneous and disciplined body. Khan Saheb's word is law to you. You have proved your capacity to receive the blows without retaliation. But this is only the first step in your probation, not the last. To gain India's freedom, the capacity for suffering must go hand in hand with the capacity for ceaseless labour. A soldier for freedom must incessantly work for the benefit of all. The resemblance between you and the ordinary soldiers begins and ends with the cut of the uniform and with perhaps their nomenclatures, which you have adopted. But unlike them the basis of all your activity is not violence but non-violence. Therefore, your training, your preoccupations, your mode of working, and even your thoughts and aspirations must necessarily be different from theirs. A soldier in arms is trained to kill. Even his dreams are about killing. He dreams of fighting and of winning fame and advancement on the battlefield by the powers of his arms. He has reduced killing to an art. A satyagrahi, a Khudai Khidmatgar, on the other hand, would always long for an opportunity for silent service. All his time would be given to labour of love. If he dreams, it will not be about killing but about laying down his life to serve others. He has reduced dying innocently and for his fellowmen to an art."

"But what shall be the training that will fit you out for this sort of work?" he asked, and said that it must be the training in various branches of constructive work. "With one lakh Khudai Khidmatgars trained in the science of constructive non-violence," he observed,

"trans-border raids should become a thing of the past. You should consider it a matter of utter shame if a single theft or dacoity takes place in your midst. Even the thieves and trans-border raiders are human beings. They commit crime not for the love of the thing itself but because they are driven to it largely by necessity and want. They know no other. The only method of dealing with them that has been adopted so far has been that of employing force. They are given no quarter and they also give none. Dr. Khan Sahib feels helpless against them because the Government has no other way of dealing with them. But you can make a non-violent approach to the problem, and I am sure you will succeed where the Government has failed. You can teach them to live honestly like yourselves by providing them cottage occupations. You can go in their midst, serve them in their homes and explain things in a loving and sympathetic manner, and you won't find them altogether unamenable to the argument of love. There were two ways open to you today, the way of brute force, that has already been tried and found wanting, and the way of peace. You seem to have made your final choice. May you prove equal to it."

After three days' tour Gandhi returned to Utmanzai for taking rest and attending to *Harijan*. Referring to the Muslim Leaguers' resentment against being addressed as "Shri", he wrote a note on "Mr. and Esquire *v.* Shri, Maulana, Janab and the like":

"Some friends told me on my putting 'Shri' before 'Jinnah' instead of 'Mr.' in my statement made before I visited him in Bombay that it must have offended him. I demurred and said that if he was offended, he would have given me a gentle hint. I would have apologized and used an adjective he liked best. The readers will remember that in the heyday of non-co-operation, the terms 'Mr.' and 'Esquire', were dropped by Congressmen and the nationalist press, and 'Shri' was the title largely used for all, irrespective of religion. Though the practice has largely fallen into desuetude, I have never given it up. But for our bad habit, I was going to say slavish mentality, we would never have used 'Mr.', or 'Esquire' before or after Indian names. In Europe an Englishman never addresses foreigners as 'Mr.' or 'Esquire', but uses the adjectives current in the respective countries. Thus Hitler is never called 'Mr.', he is 'Herr' Hitler. Similarly Mussolini is neither 'Mr.' nor 'Herr', he is 'Signor'. Why we should have dropped our own nomenclature, I do not know. But

a moment's detachment from the prevailing habit should show us that the use of 'Mr.' and 'Esquire' before or after the Indian names sounds ludicrous.

"I must, however, admit that the use of 'Shri' before the Muslim names, in these days of mutual suspicion, may not please Muslim friends. I have discussed the matter with some Muslim friends and they told me that the word 'Maulvi' was the usual adjective. 'Janab' I have heard often in the south. Anyway, I can say that in using 'Shri' for the Muslim Indian names, I have had no idea except the friendliest. When anybody calls me 'Mr.', the use of the word jars on me. The happiest Hindu usage is 'ji'. I remember I always used to address the Late Hakim Ajmal Khan as Hakimji. Some Muslim friends told me that Hakim Saheb would be preferred by Muslims. I had not known before of any such preference. But since the correction, except for the inadvertent use of 'ji', I always addressed the deceased patriot as Hakim Saheb. I could not address him as 'Mr.' Ajmal Khan, even if somebody deposited five salted canes on the naked back. It seems that we become 'misters' and 'esquires' after we receive English education!!! Will readers learned in this kind of lore help me and persons like me by giving the uncontaminated usages in vogue in India?"

In his quiet retreat at Utmanzai, Gandhi sat down for two days on the 19th and 20th October to discuss and compare notes with Ghaffar Khan after his short tour of Peshawar and Mardan districts. "What is your impression?" he asked Ghaffar Khan. "How do the Khudai Khidmatgars stand with regard to non-violence?" "My impression, Mahatmaji," he replied, "is, as they themselves admitted before us the other day, they are raw recruits and fall far short of the standard. There is violence in their hearts which they have not been able altogether to cast out. They have their defects of temper. But there is no doubt as to their sincerity. Given a chance they can be hammered into shape and I think the attempt is worth while."

Ghaffar Khan was himself dreadfully in earnest and he was convinced that violence had been the bane of his people. "Mahatmaji, this land, so rich in fruit and grain, might well have been a smiling little Eden upon this earth, but it has today fallen under a blight. My conviction is daily growing deeper that more than anything else, violence has been the bane of us Pathans in this province. It shattered our solidarity and tore us with wretched internal feuds.

The entire strength of the Pathan is today spent in thinking how to cut the throat of his brother. To what fruitful use this energy might not be put if only we could be rid of this curse?

"Whatever may be the case with the other provinces, I am firmly convinced that so far as the Frontier Province is concerned, the non-violence movement is the greatest boon that God has sent to us. There is no other way of salvation for the Pathans except through non-violence. I say this from my experience of the miraculous transformation that even the little measure of non-violence that we have attained has wrought in our midst. Mahatmaji, we used to be so timid and indolent. The sight of an Englishman would frighten us. We thought nothing of wasting our time in idleness. Your movement has changed all this. It has instilled fresh life into us and made us more industrious so that a piece of land that formerly used to yield hardly ten rupees worth of produce only, now produces double that amount. We have shed our fear and we are no longer afraid of an Englishman or, for the matter of that, of any man."

He gave an instance of how during the civil disobedience days an English officer accompanied by a body of soldiers had ordered the dispersal of a procession of the Red Shirts. He had a prohibitory order under section 144 in his pocket but would not show it as he was out to bully. He even tried to snatch away the national flag which a Red Shirt volunteer, who was leading the procession, carried in his hand. But he would not surrender it, whereupon the officer grew wild and shouted out the order 'fire' to his soldiers. But he was flabbergasted by the calm determination of the Red Shirts who stood fast where they were, ready to receive the bullets. So he had had not the courage to proceed further. "Mahatmaji," Ghaffar Khan exclaimed, "You should have seen his condition at that time. He could hardly speak. I tried to set him at ease by telling him that unarmed as we were, he had nothing to fear from us and if he had produced the prohibitory order at the outset, instead of trying to bear us down by arrogance and stupidity issuing the order to open fire, we would gladly have dispersed as it was not our intention to break orders. He felt thoroughly crestfallen and ashamed of his conduct. Englishmen are afraid of our non-violence. A non-violent Pathan, they say, is more dangerous than a violent Pathan.

"If we could assimilate and put into practice the whole of the doctrine of non-violence as you have explained it to us, how much

stronger and better off we would be. We were on the brink of utter ruination. But God in His mercy sent us the non-violence movement to save us in our extremity. I tell my people, 'What is the use of your shouting empty slogans about swaraj! You have already got your swaraj if you have learnt to shed all fear and to earn an honest, independent living through manual work.'"

Gandhi suggested to Ghaffar Khan that if the idea of non-violence was to receive a fair trial, then the Khudai Khidmatgars must be prepared rigorously to go through the course of a training in constructive non-violence that he had in mind for them. Ghaffar Khan had already decided to establish a training centre and home for the Khudai Khidmatgars in the village of Marwandi near Utmanzai. In addition to it, it was decided to start a spinning and a weaving centre in Utmanzai itself, where the people at large, who were not necessarily Khudai Khidmatgars, would learn the arts of spinning and weaving and their allied processes. "My idea, Mahatmaji," he explained, "is to change Utmanzai into a model village. The spinning and weaving centre will serve as a sort of permanent exhibition for the education of the villagers. At the home, for the Khudai Khidmatgars we shall set before us the ideal of self-sufficiency. We shall wear only the clothes that we ourselves produce, eat only such fruits and vegetables that we raise there, and have a small dairy to provide us with milk. We shall deny ourselves what we cannot ourselves produce." "Good," said Gandhi. "May I further suggest that the Khudai Khidmatgars should take their due share in the building of the huts too that are to house them?" "That is our idea," replied Ghaffar Khan.

To train the first batch of workers, Gandhi suggested that some Khudai Khidmatgars might be sent to Wardha where, besides becoming adepts in the science of khadi, they would also get proper grounding in first aid and hygiene, in sanitation and village uplift work in general, and in Hindustani. They would also get initiated into the Wardha Scheme of education, so that, on their return, they would also be competent to take up the work of mass education. "But, Khan Saheb," observed Gandhi, "your work will not make headway, unless you take the lead and yourself become an adept in all these things."

"Lastly," added Gandhi, "your work will come to naught, unless you enforce the rule of punctuality in your retreat. There must be

a fixed routine and fixed hours for rising and for retiring to bed, for taking meals and for work and rest, and they must be rigorously enforced. I attach the greatest importance to punctuality in our programme, as it is a corollary of non-violence."

They next proceeded to discuss the *modus operandi* by which the Khudai Khidmatgars, when they had become certain of their non-violence, would fulfil their mission of coping with the trans-border raids. Ghaffar Khan was of the opinion that the task was rendered infinitely difficult by the presence of the police and the military who were not fully under the popular control and whose presence there brought in all the evils of double rule. "Either the authorities should whole-heartedly co-operate with us, or they should withdraw the police and the military from one district in the first instance, and we shall then undertake to maintain the peace there through our Khudai Khidmatgars." He was afraid that unless this was done, all their efforts to establish peace would be thwarted.

Gandhi held a different view. He said: "I frankly confess that I do not expect the authorities whole-heartedly to co-operate with us. They would distrust our ability in this work, if not our motive. It is too much to expect them to withdraw the police on trust. Non-violence is a universal principle and its operation is not limited by a hostile environment. Indeed its efficacy can be tested only when it acts in the midst of and in spite of opposition. Our non-violence would be a hollow thing and nothing worth, if it depended for its success on the goodwill of the authorities. If we can establish full control over the people, we shall render the police and the military innocuous." And he further described to Ghaffar Khan how, during the Bombay riots on the occasions of the Prince of Wales' visit, the police and the military were rendered workless because the Congress immediately regained control and peace was restored.

Ghaffar Khan: "But the difficulty is that the raiders are mostly bad characters who have absconded from British India. We cannot come into touch with them, because the authorities won't permit us or our workers to go into the tribal territory."

Gandhi: "They must, and I tell you they also will, when we are fully ready. But for that we shall need to have a body of Khudai Khidmatgars who are really and truly servants of God, with whom non-violence is a living principle. Non-violence is an active force of the highest order. It is soul force or the power of the godhead



Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

Gandhi with Ghaffar Khan, October 1938



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi crossing the Swat river, Utmanzai, October 9, 1938





Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

Ghaffar Khan interpreting Gandhi's speech at a public meeting, October 1938

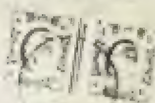
With the Khudai Khidmatgars, October 1938

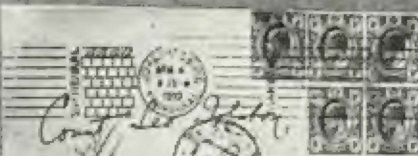
Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

During his Frontier tour in a motor van, October 1938

Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

Gandhi at a public meeting in Mardan, October 15, 1938





6

Gandhi in an article dated Utmanzai, October 20, 1938 wrote
the like". Here are illustrations of his own usage from

n "Mr. and Esquire v. Shri, Maulvi, Maulana, Janab and
etters and postal envelopes dating back to 1895





Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

Gandhi with his host Ghaffar Khan at his residence at Utmanzai village, October 1938

Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

With the Nawab of Dehra-Ismail Khan, October 29, 1938





Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

Gandhi's visit to the relics of Taxila, November 9, 1938



Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

Gandhi in the train at Taxila railway station on the way to Segaon, November 9, 1938

within us. Imperfect man cannot grasp the whole of that essence—he would not be able to bear its full blaze—but even an infinitesimal fraction of it, when it becomes active within us, can work wonders. The sun in the heavens fills the whole universe with its life-giving warmth. But if one went too near it, it would consume him to ashes. Even so, it is with godhead. We become godlike to the extent we realize non-violence; but we can never become wholly God. Non-violence is like the radium in its action. An infinitesimal quantity of it imbedded in a malignant growth, acts continuously, silently, and ceaselessly, till it has transformed the whole mass of the deceased tissue into a healthy one. Similarly, even a little of true non-violence acts in a silent, subtle and unseen way, and leavens the whole society.

"It is self-acting. The soul persists even after death, and its existence does not depend on the physical body. Similarly, non-violence or soul force too does not need physical aids for its propagation, or effect. It acts independently of them. It transcends time and space. And it follows, therefore, that if non-violence becomes successfully established in one place, its influence will spread everywhere. So long as there is a single dacoity in Utmanzai, I will say that our non-violence is not genuine.

"The basic principle on which the practice of non-violence rests is that what holds good in respect of oneself equally applies to the whole universe. All mankind in essence are alike. What is therefore possible for me is possible for everybody. Pursuing further this line of reasoning, I came to the conclusion that if I could find a non-violent solution of the various problems that arise in one particular village, the lesson learnt from it would enable me to tackle in a non-violent manner all the similar problems in the rest of India.

"And so I decided to settle down in Segaon. My sojourn has been an education for me. My experience with the Harijans has provided me with what I regard as an ideal solution for the Hindu-Muslim problem, which does away with all pacts. So if you can set things right in Utmanzai, your whole problem would be solved. Even our relations with the English will be transformed and purified, if we can show to them that we really do not stand in need of the protection for which their police and the army are ostensibly kept."

But Ghaffar Khan had a doubt. In every village there was an element of self-seekers and exploiters who were ready to go to any

length, in order to serve their selfish ends. Would it not be better, he asked, to ignore them altogether or should an attempt be made to cultivate them too?

"We may ultimately have to leave some of them out," Gandhi said, "but we may not regard anybody as irreclaimable. We should try to understand the psychology of the tyrant. He is very often the victim of his circumstances. By patience and sympathy, we shall be able to win over at least some of them to the side of justice. Moreover, we should not forget that even evil is sustained in its position through the co-operation, either willing or forced, of good. Truth alone is self-sustained. In the last resort, we can curb their power to do mischief, by withdrawing all co-operation from them and completely isolating them.

"This in essence is the principle of non-violent non-co-operation. It follows, therefore, that it must have its root in love. Its object should not be to punish the opponent or to inflict injury upon him. Even while non-co-operating with him, we must make him feel that in us he has a friend, and we should try to reach his heart by rendering him humanitarian service whenever possible. In fact, it is the acid test of non-violence that in a non-violent conflict there is no rancour left behind, and in the end the enemies are converted into friends. That was my experience in South Africa with General Smuts. He started with being my bitterest opponent and critic. Today he is my warmest friend. For eight years, we were ranged on opposite sides. But during the second Round Table Conference, it was he who stood by me and, in public as well in private, gave me his full support. This is only one instance out of many I can quote.

"Times change, and systems decay. But it is my firm faith that in the result, it is only non-violence and things that are based on non-violence that will endure. Nineteen hundred years ago Christianity was born. The ministry of Jesus lasted for only three brief years. His teaching was misunderstood even during his own time and today Christianity is a denial of his central teaching, 'Love your enemy.' But what are nineteen hundred years for the spread of the central doctrine of a man's teaching?

"Six centuries rolled by and Islam appeared on the scene. Many Musalmans will not even allow me to say that Islam, as the word implies, is unadulterated peace. My reading of the Koran has convinced me that the basis of Islam is not violence. But, here again,

thirteen hundred years are but a speck in the cycle of time. I am convinced that both these great faiths will live only to the extent that their followers imbibe the central teaching of non-violence. But it is not a thing to be grasped through mere intellect, it must sink into our hearts."

After taking a brief rest at Utmanzai, Gandhi resumed his tour on October 21. He halted at Nowshera for a couple of hours only. Gandhi and his party reached Hoti Mardan, the headquarters of the Mardan district, in the evening. A note of caution rang through the talk that Gandhi gave to the Khudai Khidmatgars at Mardan. In reply to his usual question, whether they had fully understood the meaning of non-violence and whether they would remain non-violent under all circumstances, one of them replied that they could put up with every kind of provocation except the abuse of their revered leaders. This gave Gandhi his cue, and he explained to them that non-violence could not, like the curate's egg, be accepted or rejected in part. It had value only when it was practised in its entirety: "When the sun rises the whole world is filled with its warmth, so that even the blind men feel its presence. Even so when one lakh of Khudai Khidmatgars are fully permeated with the spirit of non-violence, it will proclaim itself and everybody will feel its life-giving breath."

"I know it is difficult," he continued, "it is no joke for a Pathan to take an affront lying low. I have known Pathans since my South African days. I had the privilege of coming into close and intimate contact with them. Some of them were my clients. They treated me as their friend, philosopher and guide, in whom they could confide freely. They would even come and confess to me their secret crimes. They were a rough and ready lot. Past masters in the art of wielding lathi, inflammable, first to take part in riots, they held life cheap, and would have killed a human being with no more thought than they would a sheep or a hen. That such men should, at the bidding of one man, have laid down their arms and accepted non-violence as the superior weapon sounds almost like a fairy tale. If one lakh of Khudai Khidmatgars became truely non-violent in letter and in spirit and shed their violent past completely as a snake does its outworn skin, it would be nothing short of a miracle. That is why in spite of the assurance of your faith in non-violence that you have given me, I am forced to be cautious and preface my remarks with

an 'if'. My diffidence is only a measure of the difficulty of the task. But nothing is too difficult for the brave, and I know that Pathans are brave."

He then described the signs by which he would judge whether they had imbibed the spirit of non-violence.

"The crucial test by which I shall judge you is this: Have you befriended and won the confidence of each and all in your locality? Do the people regard you with love or with fear? So long as single individual is afraid of you, you are no true Khudai Khidmatgar. A Khudai Khidmatgar will be gentle in his speech and manner, the light of purity will shine forth from his eyes, so that even a stranger, a woman, or even a child, would instinctively feel, that here was a friend, a man of God, who could be trusted implicitly. A Khudai Khidmatgar will command the co-operation of all sections of the community, not the sort of obedience that a Mussolini or a Hitler can command through his unlimited power of coercion, but the willing and spontaneous obedience which is yielded to love alone. This power can be acquired only through ceaseless, loving service, and waiting upon God. When I find that under your influence, the people are gradually giving up their dirty and insanitary habits, the drunkard is being weaned from drink and the criminal from crime and the Khudai Khidmatgars are welcomed everywhere by people as their natural protectors and friends in need, I shall know that, at last, we have got in our midst a body of men who have really assimilated the spirit of non-violence and the hour of India's deliverance is close at hand."

Swabi tahsil, the north-eastern part of Mardan district, was one of the strongholds of the Red Shirt movement. Gandhi's speech here was a passionate appeal to the Khudai Khidmatgars to turn the searchlight inwards. They had proved their mettle by marching to jail in their hundreds and thousands. But that was not enough, he told them. Mere filling of the jails would not bring India freedom: "Even thieves and criminals go to prison, but their jail-going has no merit. It is the suffering of the pure and the innocent that tells. It is only when the authorities are compelled to put into prison the purest and the most innocent citizens, that a change of heart is forced upon them."

The week following was crowded with a strenuous programme of the tour in Kohat, Bannu and Dera-Ismail Khan districts. The

distances to be covered everyday grew longer, motor journey more fatiguing and the crowds noisier and less disciplined, as he moved away from the purely Pushto-speaking districts of Peshawar and Mardan, 'Red Shirt districts' as they are popularly known. To this was added the strain of the public meetings. Gandhi would have preferred to speak exclusively for the Khudai Khidmatgars, but he had to yield to pressure from Ghaffar Khan who himself would not take rest in spite of his Ramzan fast.

Before proceeding for Kohat, Ghaffar Khan decided to have with him a batch of Khudai Khidmatgars to accompany Gandhi during the rest of the tour. Kohat district lay in the heart of the Frontier Province. The programme there was crowded. The district Congress committee gave Gandhi an address on behalf of the Kohat citizens on October 22. Referring to the representations that he had received in the course of the day, Gandhi said in his reply:

"I have given over one hour today to acquaint myself with your difficulties and woes. But I confess to you that I am no longer fit to tackle such matters. While on the one hand, old age is slowly creeping over me, on the other, my responsibilities are becoming more and more multifarious, and there is danger that if I have too many irons in the fire, I may not be able to do justice to the more important of my responsibilities. And among these, the responsibility that I have undertaken in respect of the Khudai Khidmatgars is the more important, and if I can carry it out to my satisfaction, in collaboration with Khan Saheb, I will feel that my closing years have not been wasted.

"People laugh at me and at the idea of the Khudai Khidmatgars becoming the full-fledged non-violent soldiers of swaraj. But their mockery does not affect me. Non-violence is a quality not of the body but of the soul. And once its central meaning sinks into your being, all the rest by itself follows. Human nature in the Khudai Khidmatgars is not different from mine. And I am sure that if I can practise non-violence to some extent, they and for the matter of that any one also can. I, therefore, invite you to pray with me to the Almighty that He may make real my dream about the Khudai Khidmatgars."

Twenty-six miles to the west of Kohat was Hungu, the headquarters of the tahsil. There was a public meeting and an address saying that the Frontier Province held the key to India's freedom.

Gandhi in his speech added that in the Frontier Province again the Khudai Khidmatgars held the key: "Even as the rose fills with its sweet fragrance all the air around, when one lakh of the Khudai Khidmatgars become truly non-violent, their fragrance will permeate the entire length and breadth of the country and cure the evil of slavery with which we are afflicted."

Gandhi reached Bannu on October 24, after eighty miles' drive. In all important villages, on the way, people had erected arches of green plantain stems and leaves, and beflagged the approaches to the villages, to accord him a welcome. For eight long miles, on one side of Bannu, the Red Shirts were posted at regular intervals, interspersed with knots of Waziris. Bhittanies and Orakzais lined the route. Their flowing robes, loose baggy pyjamas, camels and native matchlocks, which they carried on their shoulders, lent a bizarre effect to the reception which was enlivened by the sound of *surnai* and drums.

Bannu, a walled city, was still under the shadow of a recent raid which had startled the whole of India. A party of raiders numbering about two hundred had marched one evening into the city, through one of the gates of the city which they forced or got opened by the sentries on duty. They looted shops while the town was still awake, fired shots as they progressed, and set some other shops on fire. And yet, they met with no resistance from the police and made their exit as openly as they had come in, carrying away with them booty, which had been variously estimated from one to three lakhs. Several people were killed during the raid.

In the course of the day, Gandhi was met by a deputation on behalf of the Citizens' Defence Committee, and another on behalf of the Sufferers' Relief Committee. A group of the Waziri tribesmen and some of the bereaved relations of the kidnapped persons from Pahar Khel and Jhandu Khel, also met him and narrated to him their tales of woe. One of them had lost his wife and a near relation kidnapped; another had his mother and uncle carried away by the raiders.

At Bannu, on October 25, Gandhi delivered one of his most important speeches:

"Perhaps you know, that for over two months, I have been observing complete silence. I have benefited by it, and, I believe, it has benefited the country too. The silence was originally taken in

answer to an acute mental distress, but subsequently I decided to prolong it indefinitely on its own merits. It has served me as a wall of protection and enabled me to cope with my work better than before. When I came here, I had resolved to relax my silence only for the purpose of having talks with the Khudai Khidmatgars, but I had to yield to Khan Saheb's pressure.

"Your addresses have eulogized me, and thanked me for having come here. I do not think I deserve any praise or thanks. I know that I can do very little to satisfy your expectations. My visit to the Frontier Province is purely to meet the Khudai Khidmatgars, and know for myself their understanding of non-violence. My visit to your town is a by-product.

"I gave many hours today seeing deputations and studying the papers presented to me. The recent raid of Bannu and the happenings during the raid have touched me deeply. This province is peculiarly placed and is different from the other provinces, inasmuch as on one side it is surrounded by a number of border tribes containing men whose profession is raiding. So far as I have been able to know, they are not actuated by communal considerations. The raiders' motive seems to be satisfaction of primary needs. That the Hindus are more often their victims is probably due to the fact that they generally possess more money. The kidnapping too appears to have the same motive.

"Continuation of the raids is, in my opinion, a proof of British failure in this part of India. Their Frontier policy has cost India crores of rupees and thousands of lives have been sacrified. The brave tribesmen still remain unsubdued. If all the accounts I have heard today are substantially correct, and I believe they are, life and property are not secure in most parts of the province.

"A number of people, whose relations or dear ones have either been killed or kidnapped and held to ransom by the raiders, saw me today. As I listened to the harrowing tales of distress, my heart went out to them in sympathy. But I must confess to you that with all the will in the world, I possess no magic spell by which I could restore them to their families. Nor should you expect much from the Government or the Congress ministry. No Government can afford to, and the British Government lacks even the will to mobilize its military resources every time one of its subjects is kidnapped, unless the person kidnapped happens to belong to the ruling race.

"After studying all the facts, I have gained the impression that the situation in respect of the border raids has grown worse since the inauguration of Congress Government. The Congress ministers have no effective control over the police, and none over the military. The Congress ministry in this province has less than the others. I, therefore, feel that unless Dr. Khan Sahib can cope with the question of the raids, it might be better for him to tender his resignation. There is the danger of the Congress losing all prestige in this province, if the raids continue to increase. Apart from my opinion, you have to say for yourselves whether in spite of the handicaps I have mentioned, you would rather have the Congress ministry or some other. After all, the Prime Minister is your servant. He holds office under the triple sufferance of his electorate, the provincial Congress committee and the Working Committee.

"Some of those who met me today asked me, if they could seek safety by migrating from the Frontier Province. I told them that migration is a perfectly legitimate course to adopt, when there is no other way of living with safety and honour. A complaint has further been brought to me that the Muslim population in the affected places no longer give help against the raiders, which they used to formerly, before certain sections of the Frontier Crime Regulations Act were repealed, and that has encouraged the raiders. While that may be true, let me warn you that if you depend for your protection on the armed assistance of others, you must be prepared sooner or later to accept the domination of these defenders. Of course, you are entitled to learn the art of defending yourselves with arms. But you must develop a sense of co-operation. In no case, should you be guilty of cowardice. Self-defence is everybody's birthright. I do not want to see a single coward in India.

"The fourth alternative is that of non-violent approach, which I am here before you to suggest. It is the surest, infallible method of self-defence. If I had my way, I would go and mix with tribes, and argue it out with them, and I am sure they won't be impervious to the argument of love and reason. Today, that door is shut to me. The Government won't permit me to enter the tribal territory.

"The tribesman cannot be the bogy man that he is represented to be. He is human just like you and me and capable of responding to the human touch, which has hitherto been conspicuous by its absence in dealing with him. A number of Waziris came and saw

me today at noon. I did not find that their nature was essentially different from human nature elsewhere.

"Man's nature is not essentially evil; brute nature has been known to yield to the influence of love. You must never despair of human nature. You are a community of traders. Do not leave out of your traffic that noblest and most precious of merchandise, namely, love. Give to the tribesmen all the love that you are capable of, and you will have theirs in return.

"To seek safety by offering blackmail or ransom to the raiders would be a direct invitation to them to repeat their depredations and will be demoralizing alike to the giver and the tribesmen. Instead of offering them money, the rational course would be to raise them above penury by teaching them industry and thereby removing the principal motive that leads them into raiding habit.

"I am having talks with the Khudai Khidmatgars in this connection and evolving a plan in collaboration with Khan Saheb. If the plan bears fruit, and the Khudai Khidmatgars truly become what their name signifies, the influence of their example, like the sweet fragrance of the rose, will spread to the tribes and might provide a permanent solution of the Frontier question."

Before leaving Bannu, Gandhi went to see the site of the recent raid, and then he left for Lakki, the headquarters of Marwat tahsil. An interesting feature of the programme there was the *Kathak* dance that Ghaffar Khan had specially arranged for Gandhi. Like many other folk arts, it was fast falling into desuetude, when the Khudai Khidmatgar movement came to its rescue. The elemental vigour and simplicity of its rhythmic movements to the accompaniment of the drums and the *surnais* held the spectators spellbound. There was a public meeting at night, where the forest of matchlocks and service rifles, with which the huge gathering was bristling, provided an appropriate background for his theme, namely, "the power of disarmament."

"I am here to tell you," he said, "with fifty years' experience of non-violence at my back, that it is an infinitely superior power as compared to brute force. An armed soldier relies on his weapons for his strength. Take away from him his weapons, his gun or his sword, and he generally becomes quite helpless. But a person who has truly realized the principle of non-violence has the god-given strength for his weapon and the world has not yet known anything

that can match it. Man may, in a moment of unawareness, forget God, but He keeps watch over him and protects him always. If the Khudai Khidmatgars have truly understood this secret, and if they have realized that non-violence is the greatest power on earth, well and good; otherwise it would be better for Khan Saheb to restore to them their weapons which they have discarded at his instance. The Khudai Khidmatgars will then be at least brave after the manner of the world that has today made the worship of brute force its cult. But if they discard their old weapons and at the same time remain strangers to the power of non-violence, it would be a tragedy for which I for one am not and, so far as I know, Khan Saheb too is not prepared."

Gandhi's address to the Khudai Khidmatgars was an exposition of the difference between the organization of violence and that of non-violence. "The principles on which a non-violent organization is based," he observed, "are different from and the reverse of what obtains in a violent organization. For example, in the orthodox army, there is a clear distinction made between an officer and a private. The latter is subordinate and inferior to the former. In a non-violent army, the general is just the chief servant, first among equals. He claims no privilege over or superiority to the rank and file. You have fondly given the title 'Badshah Khan' to Khan Saheb. But if in his heart of hearts, he actually began to believe that he could behave like an ordinary general, it would spell his downfall and bring his power to an end. He is Badshah in the sense only that he is the truest and foremost Khudai Khidmatgar and excels other Khudai Khidmatgars in the quality and quantity of service.

"The second difference between a military organization and a peace organization is that in the former, the rank and file have no part in the choice of their general and other officers. These are imposed upon them and enjoy unrestricted power over them. But in a non-violent army, the general and the officers are elected or are as if elected when their authority is moral and rests solely on the willing obedience of the rank and file.

"So much for the internal relations between the general of a non-violent army and his soldiers. Coming to their relations with the outside world, the same sort of difference is visible between these two kinds of organizations. Just now we had to deal with an enormous crowd that had gathered outside this room. You tried to disperse

it by persuasion and loving argument, not by using force and, when in the end we failed in our attempt, we withdrew and sought relief from it by getting behind the closed doors in this room. Military discipline knows nothing of moral pressure.

"Let me proceed a step further. The people who are crowding outside here are all our friends, though they are not Khudai Khidmatgars. They are eager to listen to what we may tell them. Even their indiscipline is a manifestation of their love. But there may be many others besides them elsewhere, who may not be well disposed towards us and who may even be hostile to us. In armed organizations the only recognized way of dealing with such persons is to drive them out. Here, to consider the opponent, or, for the matter of that, anybody, even in thought as your enemy would, in the parlance of non-violence or love, be called a sin. Far from seeking revenge, a votary of non-violence would pray to God that He might bring about a change of heart of his opponent and if that does not happen he would be prepared to bear any injury that his opponent might inflict upon him, not in a spirit of cowardice or helplessness, but bravely with a smile upon his face. I believe implicitly in the ancient saying that non-violence, real and complete, will melt the stoniest hearts."

He illustrated his remarks by describing how Mir Alam Khan, his Pathan assailant in South Africa, had ultimately repented and become friendly. "This could not have happened if I had retaliated. My action can be fitly described as a process of conversion. Unless you have felt within you this urge to convert your enemy by love, you had better retrace your steps. This business of non-violence is not for you. 'What about thieves, dacoits and spoilers of defenceless women?' you will ask. Must a Khudai Khidmatgar maintain his non-violence in regard to them too? My reply is, 'Most decidedly yes.' Punishment is God's who alone is the infallible Judge. It does not belong to man 'with judgement weak'. Renunciation of violence must not mean apathy or helplessness in the face of wrongdoing. If our non-violence is genuine and rooted in love, it ought to provide a more effective remedy against wrongdoing than the use of brute force. I certainly expect you to trace out the dacoits, show them the error of their ways, and in so doing, brave even death."

On the evening of October 27, Gandhi arrived at Dera-Ismail Khan. It was still passing through the aftermath of the 1930 Hindu-

Muslim riots with its horrid memories of arson and loot. The local Congress organization existed only in name and the co-operation of the Khudai Khidmatgars was unwelcome to the local volunteers. Referring to the strained relations, Gandhi said: "These differences are unfortunate. If, however, Khudai Khidmatgars live up to their creed as they have now understood it, the differences and quarrels will be things of the past. They are on their trial. If they come out victorious, they will be instrumental in bringing about communal unity and establishing swaraj. I do know, to banish anger altogether from one's breast is a difficult task. It cannot be achieved through purely personal effort. It can be done only by God's grace. I ask you all to join me in the prayer that God might enable the Khudai Khidmatgars to conquer the last traces of anger and violence that might still be lurking in their breasts."

At the public meeting held on October 31 at Dera-Ismail Khan, Gandhi referred to the lament of the Hindus. "They feel," he said "that the existence of a microscopic Hindu minority in the midst of the predominantly Musalman population in this area can be rendered possible only if the latter will be as true *hamsayas*, neighbours, to them, and they have asked me to appeal to the Khudai Khidmatgars to fulfil their natural role in respect of them. I entirely endorse their feeling and their appeal and I am convinced that it is within your power to set them at their ease, if you will but fulfil the expectations you have raised in me. As I had observed on a previous occasion, the Hindus, the Musalmans and the Englishmen in this province are being weighed in the balance. History will record its verdict about the Englishmen's deeds. But Hindus and Musalmans can write their own history by being correct in their mutual dealings. For the Khudai Khidmatgars, their course of action has been determined. They have to become a living wall of protection to their neighbours. A small body of determined spirits fired by unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history. It has happened before and it may again happen if the non-violence of the Khudai Khidmatgars is unalloyed gold, not mere glittering tinsel."

In his talk to the Khudai Khidmatgars, he said: "If in your heart of hearts there is the slightest inclination to regard your non-violence as a mere cloak or a stepping-stone to greater violence, nay unless you are prepared to carry your non-violence to its ultimate logical conclusion and to pray for forgiveness even for a baby-killer and a

child-murderer, you can't sign your Khudai Khidmatgar's pledge of non-violence. To sign that pledge with mental reservations would bring disgrace upon you, your organization and hurt him whom you delight to call the pride of Afghans."

"But what about the classical instance of the defenceless sister or mother who is threatened with molestation by an evil-minded ruffian, you will ask," he continued. "Is the ruffian in question to be allowed to work his will? Would not the use of violence be permissible even in such a case? My reply is 'no'. You will entreat the ruffian. The odds are that in his intoxication he will not listen. But then you will interpose yourself between the intended victim and him. Very probably you will be killed, but you will have done your duty. Ten to one, killing you unarmed and unresisting will assuage the assailants' passion and he will leave his victim unmolested. But it has been said to me that tyrants do not act as we want or expect them to. Finding you unresisting he may tie you to a post and make you watch his rape of the victim. If you have the will, you will so exert yourself that you will break yourself in the attempt or break the bonds. In either case, you will open the eyes of the wrongdoer. Your armed resistance could do no more, while if you were worsted, the position would likely be much worse than if you died unresisting. There is also the chance of the intended victim copying your calm courage and immolating herself rather than allowing herself to be dishonoured."

On the afternoon of October 31, Gandhi entered upon the last phase of the tour. He was anxious not to extend the tour a day further than was absolutely necessary into the month of Ramzan. The punctilious care with which the Muslim hosts throughout the tour and Ghaffar Khan particularly looked after the feeding and other creature comforts of Gandhi and his party, while they themselves fasted, moved him intensely. He made a feeling reference to it in his talk to the Khudai Khidmatgars in a way-side village, where he had halted for his midday meal. "It has touched me deeply and also humbled me," he stated, "to find that at a time, when owing to the Ramzan fast, not a kitchen fire was lit in the whole of this village of Muslim homes, food had to be cooked for us in this place. I am passed the stage when I could fast with you as I did in South Africa to teach the Muslim boys, who were under my care, to keep the Ramzan fast. I had also to consider the feelings of Khan Saheb

who had made my physical well-being his day and night concern and who would have felt embarrassed if I fasted. I can only ask your pardon."

The rest of the journey was a mad rush. The party covered one hundred miles on the first day, striking out into the interior to take in the Paniala village, ten miles from the main road. It was already dusk when they reached Mire Khel and the roads were barricaded. Travelling on this section of the road was not considered to be safe and traffic was not permitted after four p.m. But Ghaffar Khan's presence made all the difference. "Tell them, we want to travel at our risk," he instructed his son Wali Khan who was at the wheel. "If you hear somebody shout out 'stop', put on the brakes at once. Nobody will touch us if they know who we are; but if you try to rush past, you may hear a shot ring out after you."

They halted for the night in the village and the rush was resumed on the following morning. They halted for a couple of hours in the village of Ahmadi Banda, skirted the town of Bannu and sped past the gray masses of clay hills of the salt range. Then on through the town of Kohat, and over the Kohat Pass. Ghaffar Khan gave a running commentary on the various sites on the route as the car sped. As they passed one of the military posts, with which the Bannu-Kohat Road was studded, he exclaimed: "What a costly futility! Mahatmaji, look at this vain display of flags and armoured cars and tanks. They have not been able to capture a small band of robbers that has been harrying this part of the country for so long. This year, the robber chief actually planted his flag on the yonder hill in sight of the military and challenged them to arrest him, but he is still at large. Either it spells hopeless inefficiency on the part of the military or deliberate criminal apathy."

They motored 125 miles and at last reached Peshawar. There were meetings with the Khudai Khidmatgars on the way both at Paniala and Ahmadi Banda. Gandhi explained to the Khudai Khidmatgars that what he had come to tell them was not any addition to or extension of their knowledge and practice and that what Badshah Khan had taught was a reversal of the past. "I have now had the assurance from your own lips of what I already had from Khan Saheb," he said at Paniala. "You have adopted non-violence not merely as a temporary expedient but as a creed for good. Therefore, mere renunciation of the sword, if there is sword in your heart,

will not carry you far. Your renunciation of the sword cannot be said to be genuine, unless it generates in your hearts a power, the opposite of that of the sword and superior to it. Hitherto revenge or retaliation has been held amongst you as a sacred obligation. If you have a feud with anybody, that man becomes your enemy for all time and the feud is handed down from father to son. In non-violence, even if somebody regards you as his enemy, you may not so regard him in return and, of course, there can be no question of revenge."

"Who could be more cruel or blood-thirsty than the late General Dyer," he asked them, "yet the Jallianwala Bagh Congress Inquiry Committee, on my advice, had refused to ask for his prosecution. I had no trace of ill will against him in my heart. I would have also liked to meet him personally and reach his heart, but that was to remain a mere aspiration." And he went on to tell them how non-violence of a Khudai Khidmatgar expressed itself in acts of service to God's creatures and the training that was necessary for it.

At the end of this talk, a Khudai Khidmatgar put a poser: "You expect us to protect the Hindus against the raiders and yet you tell us that we may not employ our weapons even against thieves and dacoits. How can the two go together?"

"The contradiction," Gandhi said, "is only apparent. If you have really assimilated the non-violent spirit, you will not wait for the raiders to appear on the scene, but will seek them out in their own territory and prevent the raids from taking place. If even then the raid does take place, you will face the raiders and tell them that they can take away all your belongings, but they shall touch the property of your Hindu neighbours only over your dead body. And if there are hundreds of Khudai Khidmatgars ready to protect the Hindu *hamsayas* with their own lives, the raiders will certainly think better of butchering in cold blood all the innocent and inoffensive Khudai Khidmatgars, who are non-violently pitched against them. You probably know the story of Abdul Quadir Jilani and his forty gold mohurs with which his mother had sent him to Baghdad. On the way the caravan was waylaid by the robbers who proceeded to strip Abdul Quadir's companions of all their belongings. Thereupon Abdul Quadir, who so far happened to be untouched, shouted out to the raiders and offered them the forty gold mohurs, which his mother had sewn into the lining of his tunic. The legend goes that

the raiders were so struck by the simple naivety of the boy, as the saint then was, that they not only let him go untouched but returned to his companions all their belongings."

The Bar Association of Peshawar presented Gandhi with an address claiming him as one of their confraternity. Gandhi, in a witty speech, while thanking them, observed that he was hardly entitled to that privilege, in the first place because he had been disbarred by his own inn and, secondly, because he had long forgotten his law. Of late, he had more often been engaged in breaking the laws than in expounding or interpreting them in the courts of the land. Still another and, perhaps, his most vital reason was his peculiar views about lawyers and doctors which he had recorded in his booklet, *Hind Swaraj*. A true lawyer he told them was one who placed truth and service in the first place and the emoluments of the profession in the next place only.

Gandhi left for Segaon on the morning of November 9. On his way, he paid a visit to Taxila with its impressive ruins and relics of the glorious days of Buddhism. The journey was done under the shadow of impending parting. Four weeks of the closest partnership in the common quest of non-violence had brought him ever so much closer to Ghaffar Khan. With a great wrench they parted, Gandhi shedding tears.

On the train, Gandhi wrote an article on "Khudai Khidmatgars and Badshah Khan":

"Wherever the Khudai Khidmatgars may be or may ultimately turn out to be, there can be no doubt about what their leader whom they delight to call Badshah Khan is. He is unquestionably a man of God. He believes in His living presence and knows that his movement will prosper only if God wills it. Having put his whole soul into his cause, he remains indifferent as to what happens. It is enough for him to realize that there is no deliverance for the Pathan except through out-and-out acceptance of non-violence. He does not take pride in the fact that the Pathan is a fine fighter. He appreciates his bravery, but he thinks that he has been spoilt by overpraise. He does not want to see his Pathan as a goonda of society. He believes that the Pathan has been exploited and kept in ignorance. He wants the Pathan to become braver than he is and wants him to add true knowledge to his bravery. And this he thinks can only be achieved through non-violence.

"And as Khan Saheb believes in my non-violence, he wanted me to be as long as I could among the Khudai Khidmatgars. For me, I needed no temptation to go to them. I was myself anxious to make their acquaintance. I wanted to reach their hearts. I do not know that I have done so now. Anyway, I made the attempt.

"But before I proceed to describe how I approached my task and what I did, I must say a word about Khan Saheb as my host. His one care throughout the tour was to make me as comfortable as the circumstances permitted and he spared no pains to make me proof against any privation or discomfort. All my wants were anticipated by him. And there was no fuss about what he did. It was all perfectly natural for him. It was all from the heart. There is no humbug about him. He is an utter stranger to affectation. His attention is, therefore, never embarrassing, never obtrusive. And so, when we parted at Taxila our eyes were wet. The parting was difficult. And we parted in the hope that we would meet again probably in March next. The Frontier Province must remain a place of frequent pilgrimage for me. For though the rest of India may fail to show true non-violence, there seems to be good ground for hoping that the Frontier Province will pass through the fiery ordeal. The reason is simple. Badshah Khan commands willing obedience from all his adherents said to number more than one hundred thousand. They hang on his lips. He has but to utter the word and it is carried out. Whether, in spite of all the veneration he commands, the Khudai Khidmatgars will pass the test in constructive non-violence remains to be seen.

"At every meeting, I repeated the warning that unless they felt that in non-violence they had come into possession of a force infinitely superior to the one they had, and in the use of which they were adepts, they should have nothing to do with non-violence and resume the arms they possessed before. It must never be said of the Khudai Khidmatgars that once so brave, they had become or been made cowards under Khan Saheb's influence. Their bravery consisted not in being good marksmen but in defying death and being ever ready to bare their breasts to the bullets. This bravery they had to keep intact and be ready to show whenever occasion demanded. For the truly brave such occasions occurred often enough without seeking . . .

"And this non-violence or goodwill was to be exercised not only against Englishmen but it must have full play even among ourselves.

Non-violence against Englishmen may be a virtue of necessity, and may easily be a cover for cowardice or simple weakness. It may be, as it often is, a mere expedience. But it could not be an expedience when we have an equal choice between violence and non-violence. Such instances occur in domestic relations, social and political relations among ourselves, not only between the rival sects of the same faith but persons belonging to different faiths. We cannot be truly tolerant towards Englishmen, if we are intolerant towards our own neighbours and equals. Hence our goodwill, if we had it in any degree, would be tested almost every day. If we actively exercised it, we would become habituated to its use in wider fields till at last it became second nature with us.

"The very name Khan Saheb had adopted for them showed that they were to serve, not to injure, humanity. For God took and needed no personal service. He served His creatures without demanding any service for Himself in return. He was unique in this as in many other things. Therefore, servants of God were to be known by the service they rendered to His creatures.

"Hence the non-violence of Khudai Khidmatgars had to show itself in their daily actions. It could be so exhibited only if they were non-violent in thought, word and deed. . .

"The Khudai Khidmatgars listened to all I said with rapt attention. Their faith in non-violence is not as yet independent of Khan Saheb. It is derived from him. But it is none the less living, so long as they have unquestioning faith in their leader who enjoys undisputed kingdom over their hearts. And Khan Saheb's faith is no lip profession. His whole heart is in it. Let the doubters live with him as I have all these precious five weeks and their doubt will be dissolved like mist before the morning sun.

"This is how the whole tour struck a very well-known Pathan who met me during the last days of tour: 'I like what you are doing. You are very clever—I do not know that cunning is not the right word. You are making my people braver than they are. You are teaching them to husband their strength. Of course, it is good to be non-violent up to a point. That they will be under your teaching. Hitler has perfected the technique of attaining violent ends without the actual use of violence. You have bettered even Hitler. You are giving our men training in non-violence, in dying without killing, so, if ever the occasion comes for the use of force, they will use it

as never before and certainly more effectively than any other body of persons. I congratulate you.'

"I was silent and I had no heart to write out a reply to disillusion him. I smiled and became pensive. I like the compliment that the Pathans would be braver than before under my teaching. I do not know an instance of a person becoming a coward under my influence. But the friend's deduction was deadly. If in the last heat the Khudai Khidmatgars prove untrue to the creed they profess to believe, non-violence was certainly not in their hearts. The proof will soon come. If they zealously and faithfully follow the constructive programme, there is no danger of their fulfilling the prognostication of the critic. But they will be found among the bravest of men, when the test comes."

Ye Are Many—They Are Few

1938

ON REACHING Segaon, Gandhi warned Congressmen against indiscipline and corruption. On November 14, 1938 he wrote:

"I have letters from Bombay, the United Provinces, Bengal and Sind, bitterly complaining that the khadi clause of the Congress constitution is honoured more in the breach than in the performance. I have mentioned the four provinces not to have it inferred that in the other provinces things are better. I have simply referred to these provinces, because there are complaints from them. People in the other provinces have not perhaps thought it worth while to draw attention to the evil which is widespread. It may well be that correspondence on the matter from other provinces has not been brought to my notice.

"The correspondents' chief complaint is that in selecting Congress candidates for municipalities or the local boards, the Congress officials do not enforce the khadi clause for such candidates. One correspondent says that the obligation of wearing khadi is waived because the Congress officials do not find competent enough candidates among khadi wearers. This would be a sound reason, if the dearth of proper khadi-clad men can be proved, for altering the clause, surely not for committing a deliberate breach of the Congress constitution. A writer justifies the waiver by arguing that there is no connection between swaraj and khadi. This again may be a good reason for a change in the constitution but not for disregarding it. Every Congressman is a potential civil resister. The right of civil disobedience accrues only to those who perform the duty of voluntarily obeying the laws of the state, more so the laws of their own making. Therefore, the Congressmen are taking very grave risks when they commit wilful breaches of the constitution.

"And is there no connection between swaraj and khadi? Were the Congressmen, who made themselves responsible for the khadi

clause in the constitution, so dense that they did not see the fallacy which is obvious to some critics? I have not hesitated to say, and I make bold to repeat now, that without khadi there is no swaraj for the millions, the hungry and the naked, and for the millions of illiterate women. Habitual use of khadi is a sign that the wearer identifies himself with the poorest in the land, that he has patriotism and self-sacrifice enough in him to wear khadi, even though it may not be so soft and elegant in appearance as the foreign fineries, nor as cheap.

"But my argument has, perhaps, no force with many Congressmen when anarchy reigns supreme among them. There is another batch of letters in my file, which continue to give me fresh evidence of corruption among Congressmen so called. One correspondent says, bogus members are increasing on a wholesale scale. The cry comes from Orissa that Congressmen do not hesitate to spread lies in order to enlist members. A Calcutta correspondent tells me that there are original members who have not paid their own subscriptions. When asked, they say they cannot spare four annas per year. The correspondent indignantly protests that these same men spend many four-anna pieces per year on cinemas. My point, however, is not that these men can afford to pay and do not. My point is that if they have not paid their subscriptions, they are not Congressmen and that the register containing their names requires to be purged of them. A U.P. correspondent writes that bribery and corruption are spoiling the good name of the Congress. He says that Congressmen do not hesitate to use their influence with the collectors and other officials to have all sorts of injustices perpetrated for the sake of themselves or their relatives. He adds that the services are ill able to resist the pressure. And he says that the growing evil may be worse than the evil that existed when the services did wrong under instructions from the British officials. This charge is most damaging if it is true. It requires careful investigation by the U.P. Government and the provincial Congress committees. Indeed, the whole of the irregularities that I have lumped together in this note require careful and immediate handling by the Working Committee and the provincial Congress committee. If the Congress is not purged of the illegalities and irregularities, it will then cease to be the power it is today and it will fail to fulfil expectations, when the real struggle faces the country."

A fortnight later Gandhi wrote an editorial on khadi:

"There is no doubt that khadi cannot compete with mill cloth, it was never meant to. If the people will not understand or appreciate the law governing khadi, it will never be universal. It must then remain the fad of the monied people and the cranks. And if it is to be merely that, the labours of a huge organization like the All-India Spinners' Association must mean a waste of effort, if not something much worse.

"But khadi has a big mission. Khadi provides dignified labour to the millions who are otherwise idle for nearly four months in the year. Even apart from the remuneration the work brings, it is its own reward. For if millions live in compulsory idleness, they must die spiritually, mentally and physically. The spinning wheel automatically raises the status of millions of poor women. Even though, therefore, mill cloth were to be given gratis to the people, their true welfare demands that they should refuse to have it in preference to khadi, the product of their labours.

"Life is more than money. It is cheaper to kill our aged parents who can do no work and who are a drag on our slender resources. It is also cheaper to kill our children whom we do not need for our material comfort and whom we have to maintain without getting anything in return. But we neither kill our parents nor our children, but consider it a privilege to maintain them no matter what their maintenance costs us. Even so must we maintain khadi to the exclusion of all other cloth. It is the force of habit which makes us think of khadi in terms of prices. We must revise our notion of khadi economics. When we have studied them from the point of view of national well-being, we shall find that khadi is never dear. We must suffer dislocation of domestic economy during the transition stage. At present we are labouring under a heavy handicap. Cotton production has been centralized for the sake of Lancashire and, if you will, for the sake of Indian mills. Prices of cotton are determined by the prices in the foreign lands. When the production of cotton is distributed in accordance with the demands of khadi economics, cotton prices would not fluctuate and, in any case, will be in effect lower than today. When the people either through state protection or through voluntary effort, have cultivated the habit of using only khadi, they will never think of it in terms of money, even as millions of vegetarians do not compare the prices of flesh foods with those

of non-flesh foods. They will starve rather than take flesh foods even though they may be offered free.

"But I recognize that very few Congressmen have this living faith in khadi. The ministers are Congressmen. They derive their inspiration from their surroundings. If they had a living faith in khadi, they could do a great deal to popularize it.

"There may be a minister whose sole business would be to look after khadi and village industries. There should, therefore, be a department for this purpose. The other departments will co-operate. Thus the agricultural department will frame a scheme of decentralization of cotton production, survey the land suitable for cotton production for the village use and find out how much cotton will be required for its province. It will even stock cotton at suitable centres for distribution. The stores department will make the purchases of khadi available in the province and give orders for its cloth requirements. And the technical departments will tax themselves to devise better wheels and other instruments of hand production. All these departments will keep in constant touch with the A.-I.S.A. and the A.-I.V.I.A., using them as their experts.

"The Revenue Minister will devise the means of protecting khadi against mill competition.

"Khadi workers will with unremitting zeal investigate the laws governing the science of khadi and will seek to make it more durable and more attractive, and believe themselves to be responsible for discovering means of making khadi universal. God helps only those who are ever watchful, and who devote all their talents to their mission.

"Congressmen in general will spread the gospel of khadi among their neighbours by themselves wearing khadi, not ceremonially but habitually, by spinning themselves, and by helping khadi workers whenever they are called upon to do so."

He next turned his attention to "Red Tape":

"If the ministers are to cope with their new responsibility, they must discover the art of burning red tape. It will strangle the new order. The ministers must see people, on whose goodwill alone they can exist. They must listen to petty and to serious complaints. But they need not keep a record of all these or the letters they receive nor even of the decisions they give. They have only to keep sufficient record to refresh their memory and to preserve the continuity

of practice. Much of the departmental correspondence must cease. The ministers are not responsible to the India Office several thousand miles away. But they are responsible to the millions of their masters who do not know what red tape is and care little. Many of them cannot read and write. But they have primary wants to be fulfilled. They have been accustomed by Congressmen to think that immediately the Congress comes into power, there will not be a hungry mouth in all India nor a naked person who wants to cover himself. The ministers have to give their time and thought to such problems, if they are to do justice to the trust they have undertaken. If they are of the so-called Gandhian hue, they must find out what it is, not from me but from within by searching inward. I may not always know what it is. But I do know that if it is properly investigated and followed, it is radical and revolutionary enough to satisfy all the real wants of India. The Congress is a revolutionary body. Only its revolution is to be distinguished from other political revolutions known to history. Whereas the previous ones have been based on violence, this one is deliberately non-violent. If it was violent, probably much of the old form and practice would have been retained. But, for the Congress most of the old forms and practice are taboo. The most potent is police and military. I have admitted that so long as Congressmen are in office and they cannot discover peaceful means of preserving order, they are bound to make use of both. But the question ever present before the ministers must be, is such use indispensable, and if it is, why is it so? If, as a result of their inquiry—not after the old style, costly and more often than not useless, but an inquiry costless but thorough and effective—they find that they cannot run the state without the use of the police and the military, it is the clearest possible sign, in terms of non-violence, that the Congress should give up office and again wander in search of the Holy Grail."

There was rumbling in the states. The last few months had witnessed the growth of the movement for full responsible government in Kashmir, Hyderabad, Travancore, Udaipur, Rajkot and Orissa. Under "States and the People", in *Harijan* of December 3, Gandhi wrote:

"The almost simultaneous awakening in the various states is a very significant event in the national struggle for independence. It will be wrong to think that such an awakening can be due to the



From Sumati Morarjee Collection

Gandhi greeting Miss C. Smith, Secretary of American Negro section of the Y.W.C.A., Segaon, December 1938



Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

Gandhi petting a newly born kid at Segaon, December 1938

From Sumati Morarjee Collection

At a rally of volunteers of the Hindustan Scouts Association, Segaon, December 1938



Photograph : Kanu Gandhi

Gandhi with C. F. Andrews, Segaon, December 1938

instigation of one person or a body of persons or any organization. It is just possible that the Haripura resolution of the Congress put the states people on their mettle and they realized as never before that their salvation depended upon their own labours. But above all, it is the time spirit that has brought about the awakening. It is to be hoped that the princes and their advisers will recognize it and meet the legitimate aspirations of the people. There is no half-way house between total extinction of the states, and the princes making their people responsible for the administration of their states and themselves becoming the trustees for the people, taking an earned commission for their labours.

"I hope, therefore, the rumour is not true that the British Government are likely, at the instance of some princes or their dewans, to announce a change in the policy recently enunciated by Earl Winterton, about the ability of the princes to grant responsible government to their people. If any of them have asked the British Government to reverse the policy, they have undoubtedly done a disservice to themselves. And if the British Government respond to the unworthy wish, they will precipitate a first-class crisis, whose magnitude it is difficult to foretell. I must refuse to believe that the British Government can commit such a blunder. Earl Winterton's announcement was but an endorsement of past practice. They are not known to have ever interfered with the states giving powers to their people, however wide they might be.

"I go a step further. Even as the British Government, as the paramount power, are bound to protect the princes against any harm from outside or within, they are equally or *a fortiori* bound to ensure just rule on the part of the princes. Hence it is their bounden duty, when they supply the police or the military to any state, to see that there is a proper emergency justifying the request and that the military or the police will be used with becoming restraint. From Dhenkanal have come to me stories of fiendish cruelty exercised by the state myrmidons under the shadow of the police supplied by the paramount power.

"Indeed, it is a question whether the responsible ministers in the provinces have not a moral responsibility in respect of the people of the states in their respective provinces. Under the constitution the ministers have no power over them. The Governor is the agent of the Viceroy, who is the representative of the paramount power.

But the ministers in the autonomous provinces have surely a moral responsibility regarding what happens in the states. So long as the states and the people are satisfied, the ministers have no worry. But have they none if there is, say, virulent epidemic in the states which, if neglected, may easily overtake the province in which they are situated? Have they none when there is a moral epidemic which seems to be raging in Dhenkanal?

"I understand that the persecuted states people are taking refuge in British Orissa. Can the ministers refuse them shelter? How many can they take charge of? Whatever happens in these states affects, for better or for worse, the province as a whole. I do believe, therefore, that the ministers by reason of the heavy responsibility resting on their shoulders have the moral right, within strict limits, to assert themselves for the sake of internal peace and decency. They cannot look on with unconcern while the people of the states—an arbitrary creation of the paramount power—are being ground to dust as they in Dhenkanal are reported to be . . .

"I feel that the ministers in the provinces are morally bound to take notice of gross misrule in the states within their borders and tender advice to the paramount power as to what, in their opinion, should be done. The paramount power, if it is to enjoy friendly relations with the provincial ministers, is bound to give sympathetic ear to their advice.

"There is one other matter which demands the urgent attention of the states and their advisers. They fight shy of the very name Congress. They regard Congressmen as outsiders, foreigners, and what not. They may be all that in law. But man-made law, if it is in conflict with the natural law, becomes a dead letter when the latter operates in full force. The people of the states look up to the Congress in all matters affecting their interest. Many of them are members of the Congress. And some like Shri Jamnalalji, hold high offices in the Congress organization. In the eye of the Congress there is no distinction between members from the states and from India called British. It is surely detrimental to the interests of the states to ignore the Congress or Congressmen, especially when it or they seek to render friendly assistance. They must recognize the fact that the people in the states are in many cases guided by the Congress. And they know that I am responsible for the policy of non-interference hitherto followed by the Congress. But with the growing influence

of the Congress, it is impossible for me to defend it in the face of injustice perpetrated in the states. If the Congress feels that it has the power to offer effective interference, it will be bound to do so when the call comes. And if the princes believe that the good of the people is also their good, they would gratefully seek and accept the Congress assistance. It is surely in their interest to cultivate friendly relations with an organization which bids fair in the future, not very distant, to replace the paramount power, let me hope, by friendly arrangement. Will they not read the handwriting on the wall?"

Gandhi's attention was, however, not confined solely to the Indian problems. The first editorial after his return from the Frontier tour was on the sad plight of the Jews in Europe, "the untouchables of Christianity":

"My sympathies are all with the Jews. I have known them intimately in South Africa. Some of them became lifelong companions. And through these friends, I came to learn much of their agelong persecution. They have been the untouchables of Christianity. The parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close. Religious sanction has been invoked in both cases for the justification of the inhuman treatment meted out to them. Apart from the friendships, therefore, there is the more common universal reason for my sympathy for the Jews.

"But, my sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice. The cry for the national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me. The sanction for it is sought in the Bible and the tenacity with which the Jews have hankered after return to Palestine. Why should the Jews not, like other peoples of the earth, make that country their home where they are born and where they earn their livelihood?

"Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English, or France belongs to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs. What is going on in Palestine today cannot be justified by any moral code of conduct. The mandates have no sanction but that of the last war. Surely, it would be a crime against humanity to reduce the proud Arabs, so that Palestine can be restored to the Jews, partly or wholly as their national home.

"The nobler course would be to insist on a just treatment of the Jews, wherever they are born and bred. The Jews born in France

are French in precisely the same sense that the Christians born in France are French. If the Jews have no home but Palestine, will they relish the idea of being forced to leave the other parts of the world in which they are settled? Or do they want a double home where they can remain at will? This cry for the national home affords a colourable justification for the German expulsion of the Jews.

"But the German persecution of the Jews seems to have no parallel in history. The tyrants of old never went so mad as Hitler seems to have gone. And he is doing it with religious zeal. For, he is propounding a new religion of exclusive and militant nationalism in the name of which any inhumanity becomes an act of humanity to be rewarded here and hereafter. The crime of an obviously mad but intrepid youth is being visited upon his whole race with unbelievable ferocity. If there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany, to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified. But I do not believe in any war. A discussion of the pros and cons of such a war is, therefore, outside my horizon or province.

"But, if there can be no war against Germany, even for such a crime as is being committed against the Jews, surely there can be no alliance with Germany. How can there be an alliance between a nation which claims to stand for justice and democracy, and one which is the declared enemy of both? Or is England drifting towards armed dictatorship and all it means?

"Germany is showing to the world how efficiently violence can be worked, when it is not hampered by any hypocrisy of weakness masquerading as humanitarianism. It is also showing how hideous, terrible and terrifying it looks in its nakedness.

"Can the Jews resist this organized and shameless persecution? Is there a way to preserve their self-respect, and not to feel helpless, neglected and forlorn? I submit there is. No person who has faith in a living God need feel helpless or forlorn. Jehovah of the Jews is a God more personal than the God of the Christians, the Musalmans or the Hindus, though as a matter of fact, in essence, He is common to all and one without a second and beyond description. But as the Jews attribute personality to God and believe that He rules every action of theirs, they ought not to feel helpless. If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home, even as the tallest gentile

German might, and challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon; I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment. And for doing this I should not wait for the fellow Jews to join me in civil resistance, but would have confidence that in the end the rest were bound to follow my example. If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now. And suffering voluntarily undergone will bring them an inner strength and joy, which no number of resolutions of sympathy passed in the world outside Germany can. Indeed, even if Britain, France and America were to declare hostilities against Germany, they can bring no inner joy and no inner strength. The calculated violence of Hitler may even result in a general massacre of the Jews by way of his first answer to the declaration of such hostilities. But if the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary suffering, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of thanksgiving and joy that Jehovah had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hands of the tyrant. For to the god-fearing, death has no terror. It is a joyful sleep to be followed by a waking that would be all the more refreshing for the long sleep.

"It is hardly necessary for me to point out that it is easier for the Jews than for the Czechs to follow my prescription. And they have in the Indian satyagraha campaign in South Africa an exact parallel. There the Indians occupied precisely the same place that the Jews occupy in Germany. And the persecution had also a religious tinge. President Kruger used to say that the white Christians were the chosen of God and the Indians were inferior beings created to serve the whites. A fundamental clause in the Transvaal constitution was that there should be no equality between the whites and coloured races including the Asiatics. There too the Indians were consigned to ghettos, described as locations. The other disabilities were almost of the same type as those of the Jews in Germany. The Indians, a mere handful, resorted to satyagraha without any backing from the world outside or the Indian Government. The British officials tried to dissuade the satyagrahis from their contemplated step. The world opinion and the Indian Government came to their aid after eight years of fighting. And that too was by way of diplomatic pressure, not of a threat of war.

"But the Jews of Germany can offer satyagraha under infinitely better auspices than the Indians of South Africa. The Jews are a

compact, homogeneous community in Germany. They are far more gifted than the Indians of South Africa. And they have organized world opinion behind them. I am convinced that, if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope. And what has today become a degrading man-hunt, can be turned into a calm and determined stand offered by unarmed men and women, possessing the strength of suffering given to them by Jehovah. It will be then a truly religious resistance offered against the godless fury of dehumanized man. The German Jews will score a lasting victory over the German gentiles in the sense that they will have converted the latter to an appreciation of human dignity. They will have rendered service to the fellow Germans and proved their title to be the real Germans, as against those who are today dragging, however unknowingly, the German name into the mire.

"And now a word to the Jews in Palestine. I have no doubt that they are going about in the wrong way. The Palestine of the Biblical conception is not a geographical tract. It is in their hearts. But if they must look to the Palestine of geography as their national home, it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of the British gun. A religious act cannot be performed with the aid of the bayonet or the bomb. They can settle in Palestine only by the goodwill of the Arabs. They should strive to convert the Arab heart. The same God rules the Arab heart who rules the Jewish heart. They can offer satyagraha in front of the Arabs and offer themselves to be shot or thrown into the Dead Sea without raising a little finger against them. They will find the world opinion in their favour in their religious aspiration. There are hundreds of ways of reasoning with the Arabs, if they will only discard the help of the British bayonet. As it is, they are co-sharers with the British in despoiling a people who have done no wrong to them.

"I am not defending the Arab excesses. I wish they had chosen the way of non-violence in resisting what they rightly regarded as an unwarrantable encroachment upon their country. But according to the accepted canons of right and wrong, nothing can be said against the Arab resistance in the face of overwhelming odds.

"Let the Jews who claim to be the chosen race prove their title by choosing the way of non-violence for vindicating their position

on earth. Every country is their home including Palestine, not by aggression but by loving service. A Jewish friend has sent me a book called *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization* by Cecil Roth. It gives a record of what the Jews have done to enrich the world's literature, art, music, drama, science, medicine, agriculture, etc. Given the will, the Jew can refuse to be treated as the outcaste of the West, to be despised or patronized. He can command the attention and the respect of the world by being man, the chosen creation of God, instead of being man who is fast sinking to the brute and forsaken by God. They can add to their many contributions the surpassing contribution of non-violent action."

There was an outburst of anger in Germany and Gandhi pursued the subject with the same vigour. "I was not unprepared," he said, "for the exhibition of wrath from Germany over my article about the German treatment of the Jews. I have myself admitted my ignorance of European politics. But in order to commend my prescription to the Jews for the removal of their many ills, I did not need to have an accurate knowledge of European politics. The main facts about the atrocities are beyond dispute. When the anger over my writing has subsided and comparative calmness has returned, the most wrathful German will find that underlying my writing there was friendliness towards Germany, never any ill will."

"It passes my comprehension," he continued, "why any German should be angry over my utterly innocuous writing. Of course, the German critics, as others, might have ridiculed it by saying that it was a visionary's effort doomed to fail. I, therefore, welcome this wrath, though wholly unmerited, against my writing. Has my writing gone home? Has the writer felt that my remedy was after all not so ludicrous as it may appear, but that it was eminently practical, if only the beauty of suffering without retaliation was realized?

"To say that my writing has rendered neither myself, nor my movement, nor the German-Indian relations any service, is surely irrelevant, if not also unworthy, implying as it does a threat; and I should rank myself a coward if, for the fear of my country or myself or the Indo-German relations being harmed, I hesitated to give what I felt in the innermost recesses of my heart to be cent per cent sound advice.

"The Berlin writer has surely enunciated a novel doctrine that people outside Germany may not criticize German action even from

friendliest motives. For my part, I would certainly welcome the interesting things that the Germans or other outsiders may unearth about Indians. I do not need to speak for the British. But if I know the British people at all, they, too, welcome outside criticism, when it is well-informed and free from malice. In this age, when distances have been obliterated, no nation can afford to imitate the fabled frog in the well. Sometimes it is refreshing to see ourselves as others see us. If, therefore, the German critics happen to see this reply, I hope that they will not only revise their opinion about my writing but also realize the value of outside criticism."

A stream of visitors went to Segaon for discussion. Communists said to Gandhi: "We confess that we do not understand what it is exactly you stand for. We oppose you, not necessarily because we always differ from you, but because we do not know your mind and so regard your actions with vague fear and distrust. Faith would become easier, if we can understand you. And so we have come to you. Possibly you too might find that some of your opinions about us needed revision, if you knew us." And by way of illustration, they cited the resolution on civil liberty that had been adopted by the A.-I.C.C. at Delhi and which had occasioned the walk-out on the part of some leftist members.

"I must confess," said Gandhi, "that I did not like the walk-out. Did it mean that you wanted the Congress to condone incitement to violence?"

"No," rebutted the communists, "we have again and again made it quite clear that we do not want any condonation of violence or incitement to violence. What distresses us is this: Whereas there was enlargement of civil liberty on the Congress taking office, since the Haripura Congress, civil liberty has actually suffered curtailment under the Congress ministries. We are driven to feel that this cry about abuse of civil liberty has been raised merely as a convenient pretext to shield the ministers, some of whom have been behaving exactly like the old bureaucrats."

"I am more than glad," replied Gandhi, "that you have come to me, because you have come to the real culprit. I must confess that I am the sole author of that resolution. It is based on unimpeachable evidence in my possession. But you should have known from my writings that they were meant to help ministers to avoid action against those who have incited to violence and actually committed

it. Instead of ministers taking action against them, my purpose was to create public opinion against violent speeches, writings or acts. The resolution was a substitute for legal action. I want you to accept my assurance that I would not screen a single minister who interferes with civil liberty or acts contrary to Congress resolutions. If you have Rajaji in mind, I am prepared to give you full satisfaction or ask him to resign."

"We feel puzzled," interposed one of them. "You have said that coercive measures should be used to put down incitement to violence. Is it right to use Government violence to check the so-called incitement to violence by Congressmen?"

"The question is badly put," replied Gandhi, "but my answer is there. There should be no Government violence. But if a man kills a little child and robs it of its ornaments and if I deprive him of the liberty to repeat the performance, I would not call my act violence. It would be violence, if my act was meant to be a punishment. I would like to make my position clearer still. You cannot have the cake and eat it. Assuming that there has been violence of speech, it has to be noticed by the Congress or the Congress ministers. I have suggested the former course. The resolution was in pursuance of that course. Of course, you may question the validity or sufficiency of proof in the possession of the Working Committee. In that case, you could have called for proofs and accepted the resolution subject to the production by the Working Committee of the proof in its possession. If you admit that violent speech or writing does not come under the protection of civil liberty, there should have been no walk-out. Surely he who runs may see that in the Congress provinces latitude of speech and writing is allowed such as has never before been enjoyed."

"All the same," interjected one of the communists reverting to the main subject, "we cannot reconcile ourselves to the bias which the High Command has persistently shown against us. We have put ourselves under Congress discipline. We have joined the Congress because it is the only body that can raise a popular movement. If we misbehave, we may be put out and should lose caste with the people. As a people's party, we must move with the people, or go out. These ministers, on the other hand, are seeking to set themselves above the people to make themselves immune to democratic influence. We are wedded to no dogma. Suggest to us what we can

do together in immediate practice. Our motives may differ, but our practice will count."

"You should also admit," said Gandhi, "that neither the resolution nor, I think, my article makes any mention of the socialists or the communists. Violence is no monopoly of any one party. I know Congressmen who are neither socialists nor communists, but who are frankly devotees of the cult of violence. Contrariwise, I know socialists and communists, who will not hurt a fly but who believe in the universal ownership of instruments of production. I rank myself as one among them. But here I am not thinking of myself, but of others whom I have the good fortune to know.

"What you have said, however, makes it clear to me that you do not put the same stress as I do on the means. But I understand your argument. Our minds are working at cross-purposes. I want to occupy a corner in your hearts, if I can. But some of you have told me frankly that it is impossible, for they look at things from opposite poles. The utmost they can do is to tolerate me because they credit me with some capacity for sacrifice and influence over the masses. Now, I make a sporting offer. One of you or all of you can come to me at Segaon, study me, see all my papers, look at the correspondence, ask me questions, and decide upon the course you would adopt in your dealings with me. There is no secrecy with me. My mission is to convert every single Indian to my view of the means of liberation. If only that happens, complete independence is ours for the having."

In early December, arrived a number of distinguished Christian leaders for discussion with Gandhi. They had come to India for a conference of the Christian missionaries in Madras. Along with Dr. Mott they trekked to Segaon. "I have thanked God," Dr. Mott remarked, "with every remembrance of you, and have always felt that you were never more needed than at this hour. I look upon you as a prophet and warrior and you have appealed wonderfully even to the people who had not seen you. We are confronted with possibly the most fateful period in history, and we want to our aid all the influence that God has given you. The conviction is growing on me that our many and taxing problems can best be solved in an international context. The world would seem to have been humbled since we last met. The conscience of the world is trembling, and there is a world-wide awareness and desire that we should in this

ever-shrinking world get closer together and that is why I am again in India—India which has got more to teach us than any other country, not excepting China."

In the conversations which he held with these Christian leaders, Gandhi dealt first with the question of money. He put his convictions in a nutshell: "I think you cannot serve God and Mammon both, and my fear is that Mammon has been sent to serve India and God has remained behind, with the result that God will one day have His vengeance. I have always felt that when a religious organization has more money than it requires, it is in peril of losing its faith in God, and pinning its faith on money. You have simply to cease to depend on it.

"In South Africa, when I started the satyagraha march, there was not a copper in my pocket, and I went with a light heart. I had a caravan of 3,000 people to support. 'No fear,' said I. 'If God wills it, He will carry it forward.' Then money began to rain from India. I had to stop it. For, when the money came, my miseries began. Whereas they had been content with a piece of bread and sugar, they now began asking for all sorts of things.

"Then take the illustration of the new educational experiment. The experiment, I said, must go on without asking for any monetary help. Otherwise, after my death, the whole organization would go to pieces. The fact is, the moment financial stability is assured, spiritual bankruptcy is also assured."

He discussed with some others the various aspects of the problem of the rescuing of humanity from the impending international crisis. Among the visitors were Rev. William Paton, the secretary of the International Missionary Council, Rev. Leslie B. Moss, the secretary of the Conference of Missionary Societies in North America, and Dr. E. Smith of the British and Foreign Bible Society, London.

One of the visitors questioned Gandhi what was the fundamental motive in the work which he had done for India. Was it social or political or religious? "Purely religious," replied Gandhi. "That was the very question asked me by the late Mr. Montagu when I accompanied a deputation which was purely political. 'How you, a social reformer,' he exclaimed, 'have found your way into this crowd?' My reply was that it was only an extension of my social activity. I could not be leading a religious life, unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind, and that I could not do unless I took part in

politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of 'sound and fury signifying nothing.' "

Gandhi was next asked in what relation his non-violence stood to the pacifist attitude, "which we the westerners are trying to adopt without much success." "In my opinion," Gandhi replied, "non-violence is not passivity in any shape or form. Non-violence, as I understand it, is the activest force in the world. Therefore, whether it is materialism or anything else, if non-violence does not provide an effective antidote, it is not the active force of my conception. Or, to put it conversely, if you bring me some conundrums that I cannot answer, I would say my non-violence is still defective. Non-violence is the supreme law. During my half a century of experience, I have not yet come across a situation when I had to say that I was helpless, that I had no remedy in terms of non-violence.

"Take the question of the Jews on which I have written. No Jew need feel helpless, if he takes to the non-violent way. A friend has written me a letter objecting that in that article I have assumed that the Jews have been violent. It is true that the Jews have not been actively violent in their own persons. But they called down upon the Germans the curses of mankind, and they also wanted America and England to fight Germany on their behalf. If I hit my adversary, that is, of course, violence, but to be truly non-violent I must love him and pray for him even when he hits me. The Jews have not been actively non-violent or, in spite of the misdeeds of the dictators, they would say, 'We shall suffer at their hands; they knew no better. But we shall suffer not in the manner in which they want us to suffer.' And if even one Jew acted thus, he would save his self-respect and leave an example which, if it became infectious, would save the whole of Jewry and leave a rich heritage to mankind besides.

"What about China, you will ask. The Chinese have no designs upon other people. They have no desire for territory. True, perhaps, China is not ready for such aggression; perhaps what looks like her pacifism is only indolence. In any case, China's is not active non-violence. Her putting up a valiant defence against Japan is proof enough that China was never intentionally non-violent. That she is

on the defensive is no answer in terms of non-violence. Therefore, when the time for testing her active non-violence came, she failed in the test. This is no criticism of China. I wish the Chinese success. According to the accepted standards, her behaviour is correct. But when the position is examined in terms of non-violence, I must say it is unbecoming for a nation of 400 millions, a nation as cultured as Japan, to repel Japanese aggression by resorting to Japan's own methods. If the Chinese had non-violence of my conception, there would be no use left for the latest machinery for destruction, which Japan possesses. The Chinese would say to Japan, 'Bring all your machinery. We present half of our population to you. But the remaining two hundred millions will not bend their knee to you.' If the Chinese did that, Japan would become China's slave." And in support of his argument he referred to Shelly's celebrated lines, "Ye are many—they are few."

"It has been objected, however," he added, "that non-violence is all right in the case of the Jews, because there is personal contact between the individual and his persecutors, but in China, Japan comes with its long-range guns and aeroplanes. The person who rains death from above has never any chance of even knowing who and how many he has killed. How can non-violence combat aerial warfare, seeing that there are no personal contacts? The reply to this is that behind the death-dealing bomb there is the human hand that releases it, and behind that still is the human heart that sets the hand in motion. At the back of the policy of terrorism is the assumption that terrorism if applied in a sufficient measure will produce the desired result, namely, bend the adversary to the tyrant's will. But supposing a people make up their mind that they will never do the tyrant's will, nor retaliate with the tyrant's own methods, the tyrant will not find it worth his while to go on with his terrorism. If sufficient food is given to the tyrant, a time will come when he will have had more than surfeit. If all the mice in the world held a conference together and resolved that they would no more fear the cat but all run into her mouth, the mice would live. I have seen a cat play with a mouse. She did not kill it outright but held it between her jaws, and then released it, and again pounced upon it as soon as it made an effort to escape. In the end the mouse died out of sheer fright. The cat would have derived no sport, if the mouse had not tried to run away. I learnt the lesson of non-violence from

my wife, when I tried to bend her to my will. Her determined resistance to my will on the one hand, and her quiet submission to the suffering of my stupidity involved on the other, ultimately made me ashamed of myself and cured me of my stupidity in thinking that I was born to rule over her, and in the end, she became my teacher in non-violence. And what I did in South Africa was but an extension of the rule of satyagraha, which she unwillingly practised in her own person."

But one of the Christian delegates objected: "You do not know Hitler and Mussolini. They are not capable of any kind of moral response. They have no conscience and they have made themselves impervious to the world opinion. Would it not be playing into the hands of these dictators if, for instance, the Czechs following your advice confronted them with non-violence? Seeing that dictatorships are unmoral by definition, would the law of moral conversion hold good in their case?"

"Your argument," said Gandhi, "presupposes that the dictators like Mussolini or Hitler are beyond redemption. But belief in non-violence is based on the assumption that human nature in its essence is one, and, therefore, unfailingly responds to the advances of love. It should be remembered that they have up to now always found ready response to the violence that they have used. Within their experience, they have not come across organized non-violent resistance on an appreciable scale, if at all. And therefore, it is not only highly likely, but I hold it to be inevitable, that they would recognize the superiority of non-violent resistance over any display of violence that they may be capable of putting forth. Moreover, the non-violent technique that I have presented to the Czechs does not depend for its success on the goodwill of the dictators, for, a non-violent resister depends upon the unfailing assistance of God which sustains him throughout difficulties which would otherwise be considered insurmountable. His faith makes him indomitable."

The visitor retorted that these dictators wisely refrain from using force but simply take possession of what they want. In the circumstances what can non-violent resisters do?

"Suppose," said Gandhi, "they come and occupy mines, factories and all sources of natural wealth belonging to the Czechs, then the following results can take place : (1) The Czechs may be annihilated for disobedience to orders. That would be a glorious victory for the

Czechs and the beginning of the fall of Germany. (2) The Czechs might become demoralized in the presence of overwhelming force. This is a result common in all struggles, but if demoralization does take place, it would not be on account of non-violence, but it would be due to absence or inadequacy of non-violence. (3) And the third thing that can take place is that Germany might use her new possessions for occupation by her surplus population. This, again, could not be avoided by offering violent resistance, for we have assumed that violent resistance is out of the question. Thus non-violent resistance is the best method under all conceivable circumstances.

"I do not think that Hitler and Mussolini are after all so very indifferent to the appeal of the world opinion. Today these dictators feel satisfaction in defying the world opinion because none of the so-called Great Powers can come to them with clean hands, and they have a rankling sense of injustice done to their people by the Great Powers in the past. Only the other day an esteemed English friend owned to me that Nazi Germany was England's sin and that it was the Treaty of Versailles that made Hitler."

"Peace will never come," he said, "until the Great Powers courageously decide to disarm themselves. It seems to me that the recent events must force that belief on the Great Powers. I have an implicit faith—a faith that today burns brighter than ever, after half a century's experience of unbroken practice of non-violence—that mankind can only be saved through non-violence."

"You have said that so far as India is concerned you are hopeful it will stick to non-violence. What are the omens of that hope?"

Gandhi replied: "If you ask for outward proofs, I can't give any. But I have an instinctive feeling that the country is not going to take to anything else. You must remember that just now I am filled with what I saw in the North-West Frontier Province. I was not prepared for what I saw."

In the wake of the Christian missionaries, came a member of the Japanese Parliament, Mr. Takaoka, who requested Gandhi to give a message to the new party in Japan, which stood for Asia for the Asiatics. "I do not subscribe to the doctrine of Asia for the Asiatics, if it is meant as an anti-European combination," remarked Gandhi. "How can we have Asia for the Asiatics, unless we are content to let Asia remain a frog in the well? But Asia cannot afford to remain a frog in the well. It has a message for the whole world, if it will only

live up to it. There is the imprint of Buddhistic influence on the whole of Asia, which includes India, China, Japan, Burma, Ceylon and the Malay States. I said to the Burmese and the Ceylonese that they were Buddhist in name only; India was Buddhist in reality. I would say the same thing to China and Japan. But, for Asia to be not for Asia but the whole world, it has to re-learn the message of Buddha and deliver it to the whole world. Today, it is being denied everywhere. In Burma, every Buddhist monk is being dreaded by the Musalmans. But why should anyone, who is a true Buddhist, be dreaded by anyone?

"You will, therefore, see that I have no message to give you but this, that you must be true to your ancient heritage. The message is 2,500 years old, but it has not yet been truly lived. But what are 2,500 years? They are but a speck in the cycle of time. The full flower of non-violence which seems to be withering away has yet to come to full bloom."

Glossary

Acharya, preceptor; teacher.
Ahimsa, non-violence.
Ashram, a hermitage; a place for study and discipline of life.
Avarna, not belonging to any of the four castes according to the Hindu scriptures.
Ba, mother.
Babu, Mr.
Babul, a twig used as tooth-brush.
Badshah, emperor.
Bakr-Id, a day of Muslim festival.
Bande Mataram, Hail Mother; the refrain of the Indian national anthem known by the same name.
Behn, sister.
Bhai, brother.
Bhajan, a hymn.
Bhangi, a scavenger.
Bhoga, enjoyment.
Bhogi, a voluptuary.
Bidi, indigenous cigarette.
Brahma, creator of the universe.
Brahmachari, one observing continence.
Brahmacharya, continence.
Chakki, grinding-stone.
Chakwat, a kind of green leaves.
Chamar, an untouchable caste; leather worker.
Chapati, thin flat cakes made of wheat flour; bread.
Charkha, a spinning wheel.
Charpai, cot.
Dal, pulse cooked in liquid form.
Daridranarayan, God in the form of indigent and poor.

Darshan, sight of a venerated person or deity.
Das, servant.
Dasanudas, servant of servants.
Dewan, prime minister of an Indian state.
Dharma, duty; religion.
Dhoti, a long piece of cloth used as a lower garment worn by men in India.
Dilruba, string instrument.
Fakir, a Muslim ascetic.
Ghani, oil-presser.
Ghee, clarified butter.
Goonda, hooligan.
Gopal, shepherd.
Goshala, cowshed.
Gram Udyog Sangh, Village Industries Association.
Gur, molasses.
Guru, a preceptor; a teacher.
Hamsaya, neighbour.
Harijan, a man of god; untouchable.
Himsa, violence.
Hindostan Hamara, our India; refrain of a national song.
Janab, sir.
Ji, an affix added to names denoting respect, e.g., Gandhiji.
Jowari, large millet; a common food grain.
Kalma, basic Muslim prayer.
Kamadhenu, cow of plenty, supposed to yield all desired objects.
Karma, action; retribution.
Karmayogi, one practising the doctrine of detached action.
Kathak, a classical dance of India.
Khaddar, khadi, hand-woven cloth from hand-spun yarn.
Khan, nobleman.
Khudai Khidmatgar, servant of God; Red Shirt volunteer.
Kisan, peasant.
Kisan Sabha, peasant organization.
Kurta, man's upper garment; an Indian shirt.
Kshetrapal, guardian of the field.
Lungi, a waist-cloth.
Luni, a sort of green leaves.
Mahajan, merchant; banker.

Mahar, untouchable caste.
Maharaja, king; ruler.
Maharani, queen.
Mahatma, a great soul.
Mal, thick string connecting and regulating the two discs of a spinning wheel.
Mantra, a sacred formula; incantation.
Maulana, a Muslim divine.
Maulvi, a Muslim priest.
Mela, fair.
Mohur, a defunct gold coin of India.
Muni, a sage.
Munj, grass used for making paper or string.
Nagar, town.
Nanda Batrisis, Gujarati story book.
Neem, a bitter twig used as tooth-brush.
Panchayat, a village council of five elected members; a council of village elders.
Pandal, canopy.
Pandit or pundit, a learned Hindu teacher; a prefix to certain Brahmin family names, e.g., Pandit Nehru.
Patidar, a landlord.
Pinjrapole, a shelter for crippled and aged cows.
Prasad, food offered to idols, or the remnants of such food.
Purna Swaraj, Complete Independence.
Raja Saheb, king; titular head.
Ramdhun, chanting of the name of Rama.
Ram Raj, kingdom of Rama; beneficent rule.
Ramzan, a sacred Muslim month during which fast is observed.
Rasa, passion; sentiment.
Rashtrabhasha, national language.
Rishi, a seer.
Roti, bread.
Sabha, conference; organization.
Sadhana, a persistent effort; dedication.
Sadhu, a virtuous man leading the life of an ascetic; an ascetic.
Sahitya Parishad, literary conference.
Sammelan, conference.
Sanatanist, orthodox Hindu.

Sangh, organization.
Sardar, nobleman; a honorific term, e.g., Sardar Patel.
Sari, a long piece of cloth worn as outer garment by Indian women.
Satyagraha, "a force which is born of truth or non-violence"; tenacious clinging to truth; civil or non-violent resistance.
Satyagrahi, one practising satyagraha.
Savarna, high caste Hindu.
Senna, leaves of indigenous plants used in Ayurvedic medicine as a purgative.
Seva, service.
Shastra, religious law books of the Hindus.
Shastri, one conversant in shastra.
Shri, Mr.
Smriti, that which is remembered and handed down by tradition, includes the three portions of the Vedas.
Surnai, a kind of wind instrument.
Swadeshi, manufacture of one's own country.
Swami, a monk.
Swaraj, self-government; self-rule.
Tahsil, sub-division of a district.
Takli, spindle-like spinning instrument.
Taluk, a revenue division.
Tatta, split-bamboo partition.
Tola, a weight equivalent to 180 grains (troy).
Vaidya, a doctor practising the Hindu system of medicine.
Varna, caste.
Varnashram, the four castes and stages of life sanctioned by the Hindu religion.
Videshi, foreign.
Vidyapith, a college.
Yajna, religious sacrifice.
Yamaraja, God of death.
Yogi, one who practises yoga.
Zamindar, landlord.
Zamindari, landlordism.

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